THOUGHTS & IMAGES

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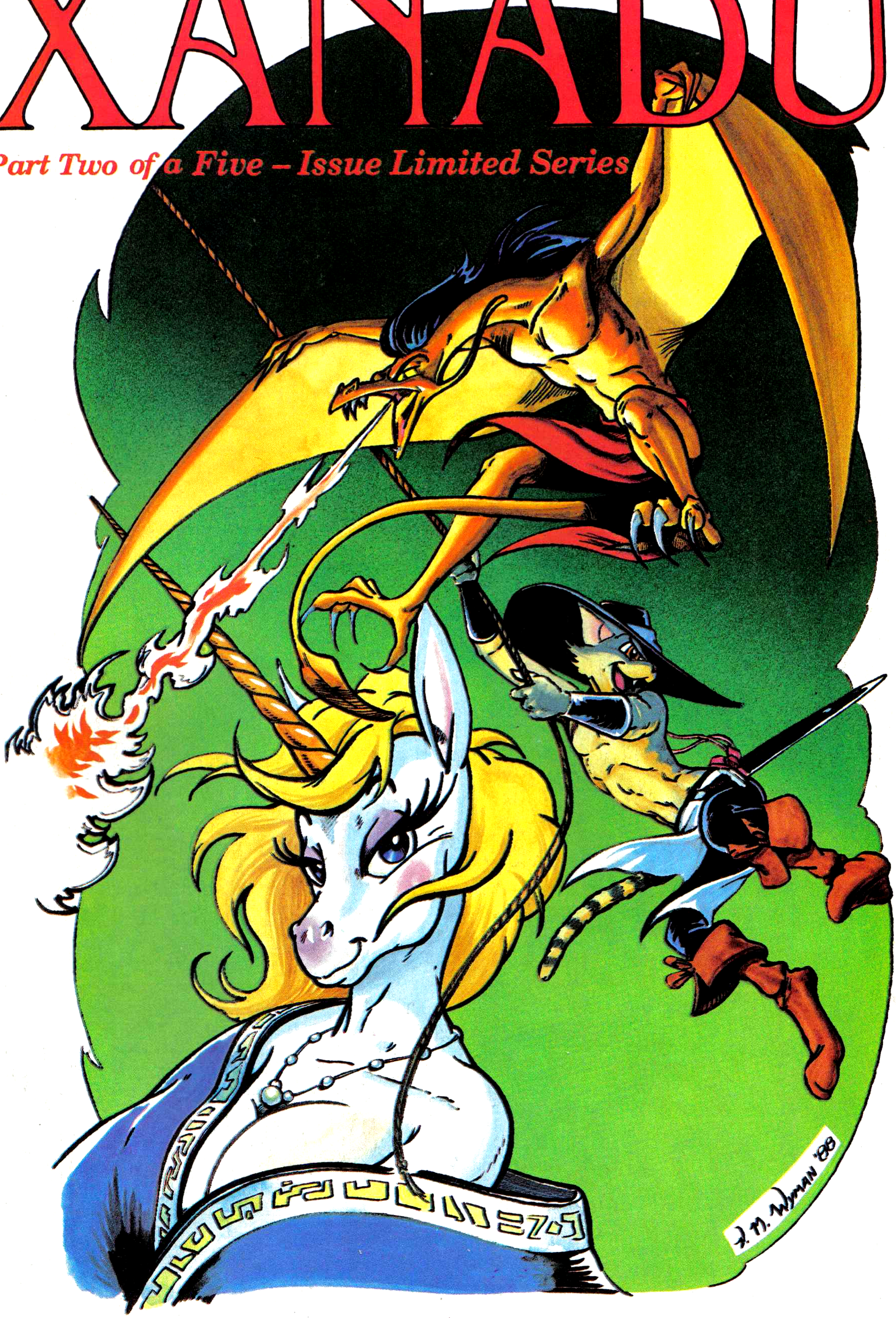
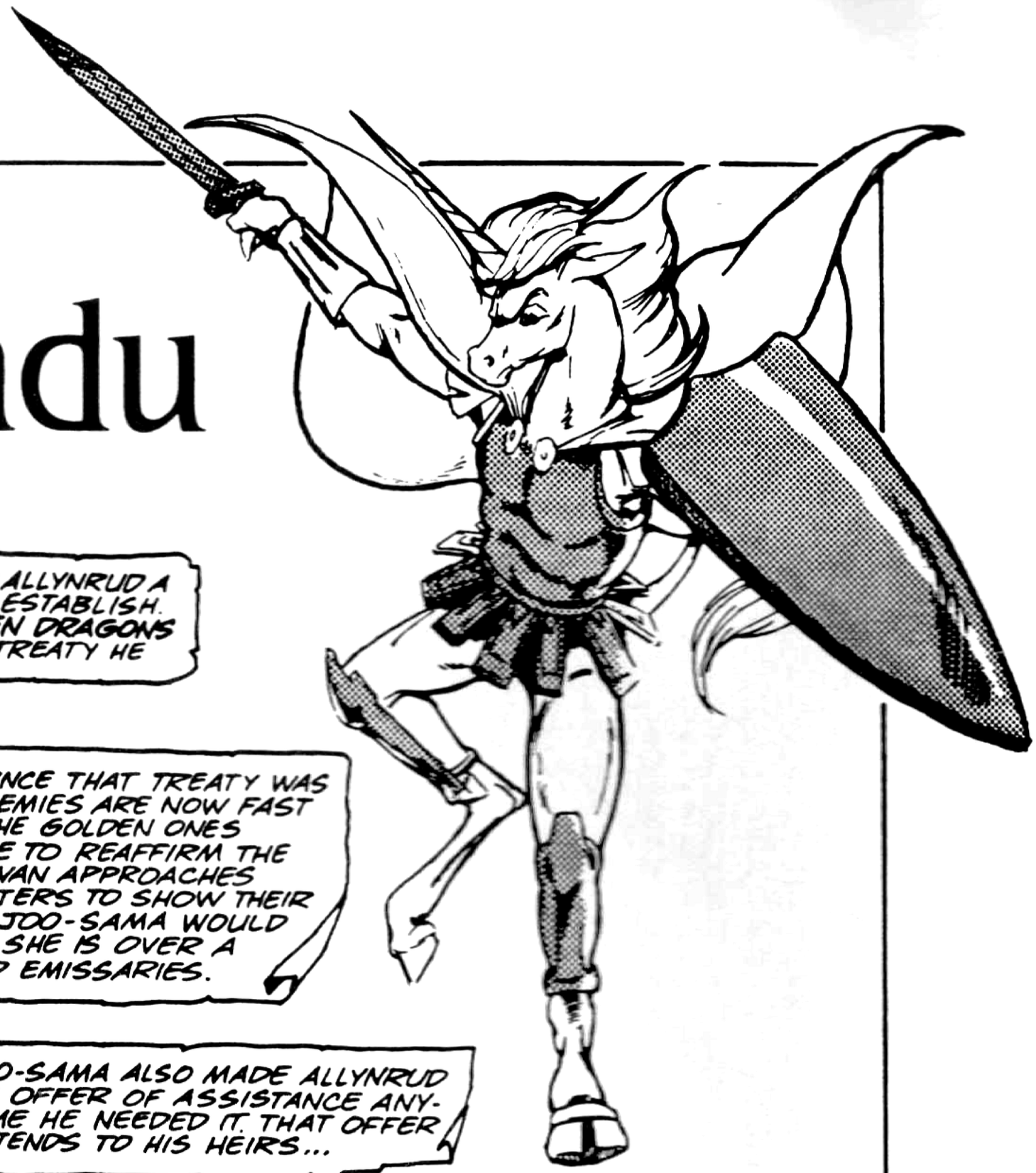
# XANADU

*Part Two of a Five – Issue Limited Series*



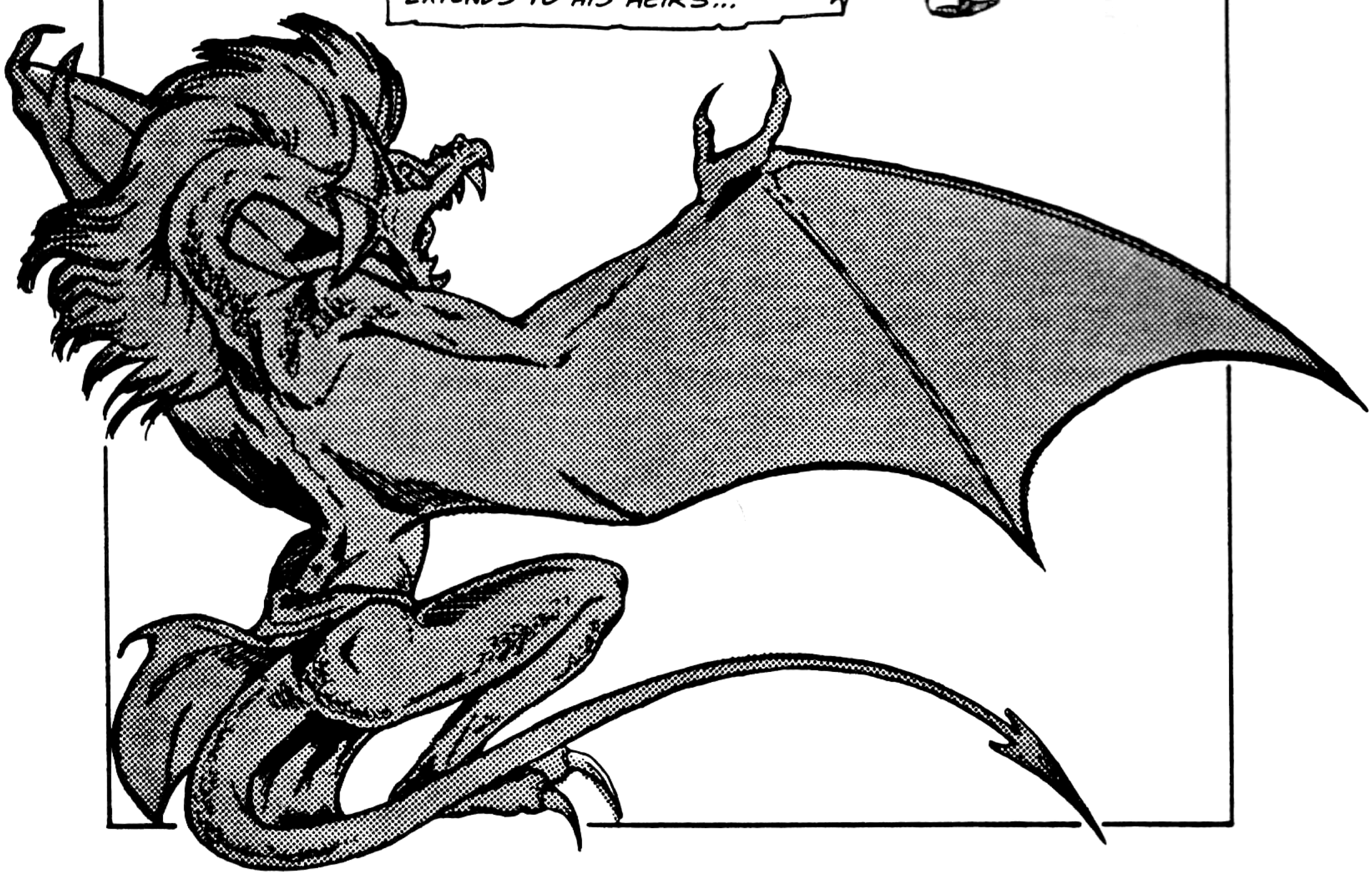
# Xanadu



IN XANADU DID ALLYNRUD A LASTING PEACE ESTABLISH. WITH THE GOLDEN DRAGONS OF THE EAST A TREATY HE ENSTATED.

THREE CENTURIES HAVE PASSED SINCE THAT TREATY WAS SIGNED AND THOSE WHO WERE ENEMIES ARE NOW FAST FRIENDS. EVERY THREE YEARS, THE GOLDEN ONES RETURN TO THE IMPERIAL PALACE TO REAFFIRM THE TREATY. ONE SUCH GOLDEN CARAVAN APPROACHES THE PALACE NOW, BORNE ON LITTERS TO SHOW THEIR PEACEFUL INTENT. ONCE QUEEN JOO-SAMA WOULD HAVE COME HERSELF, BUT NOW SHE IS OVER A MILLENNIA OLD AND SO MUST SEND EMISSARIES.

JOO-SAMA ALSO MADE ALLYNRUD AN OFFER OF ASSISTANCE ANY-TIME HE NEEDED IT. THAT OFFER EXTENDS TO HIS HEIRS...



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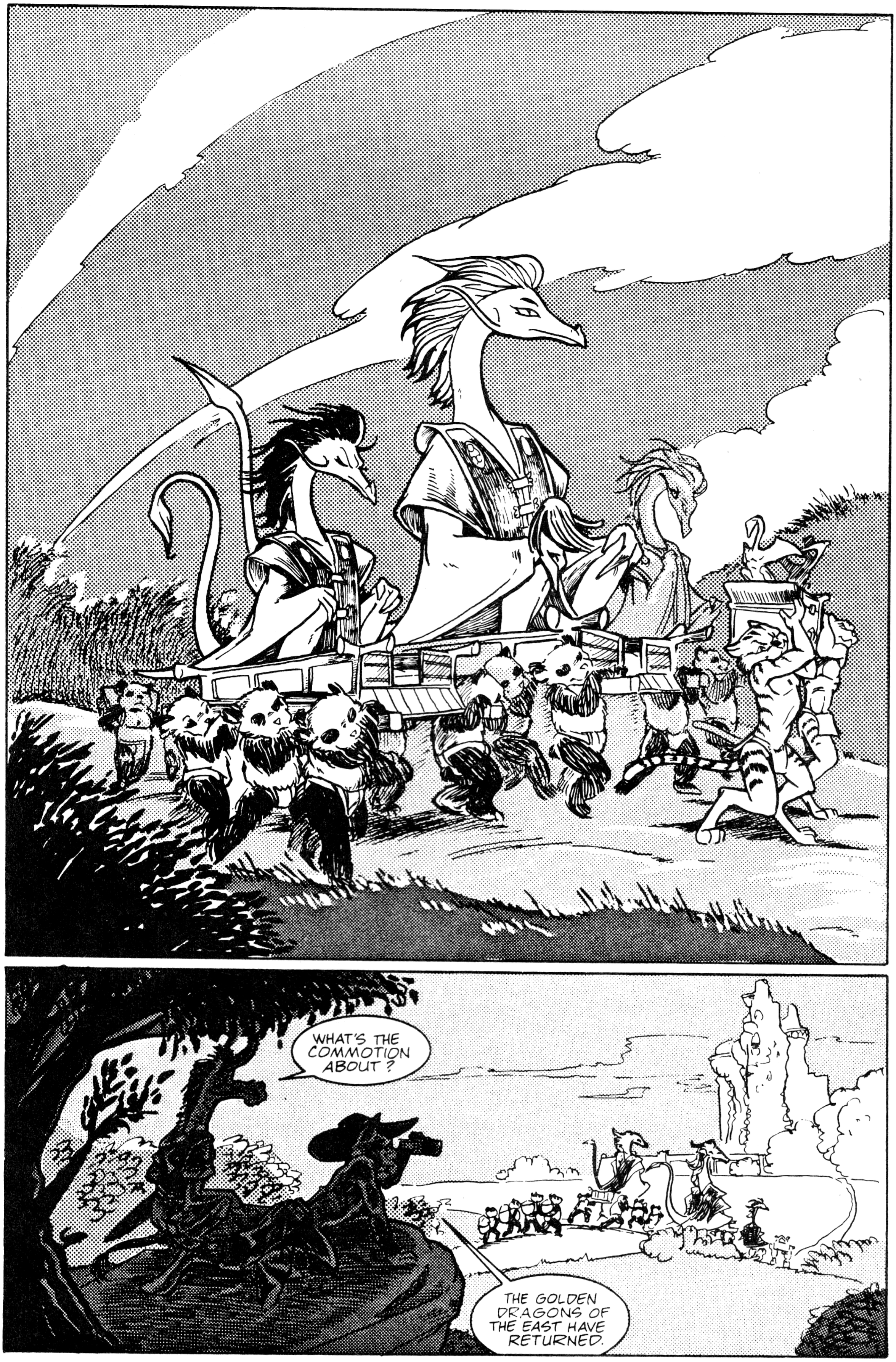
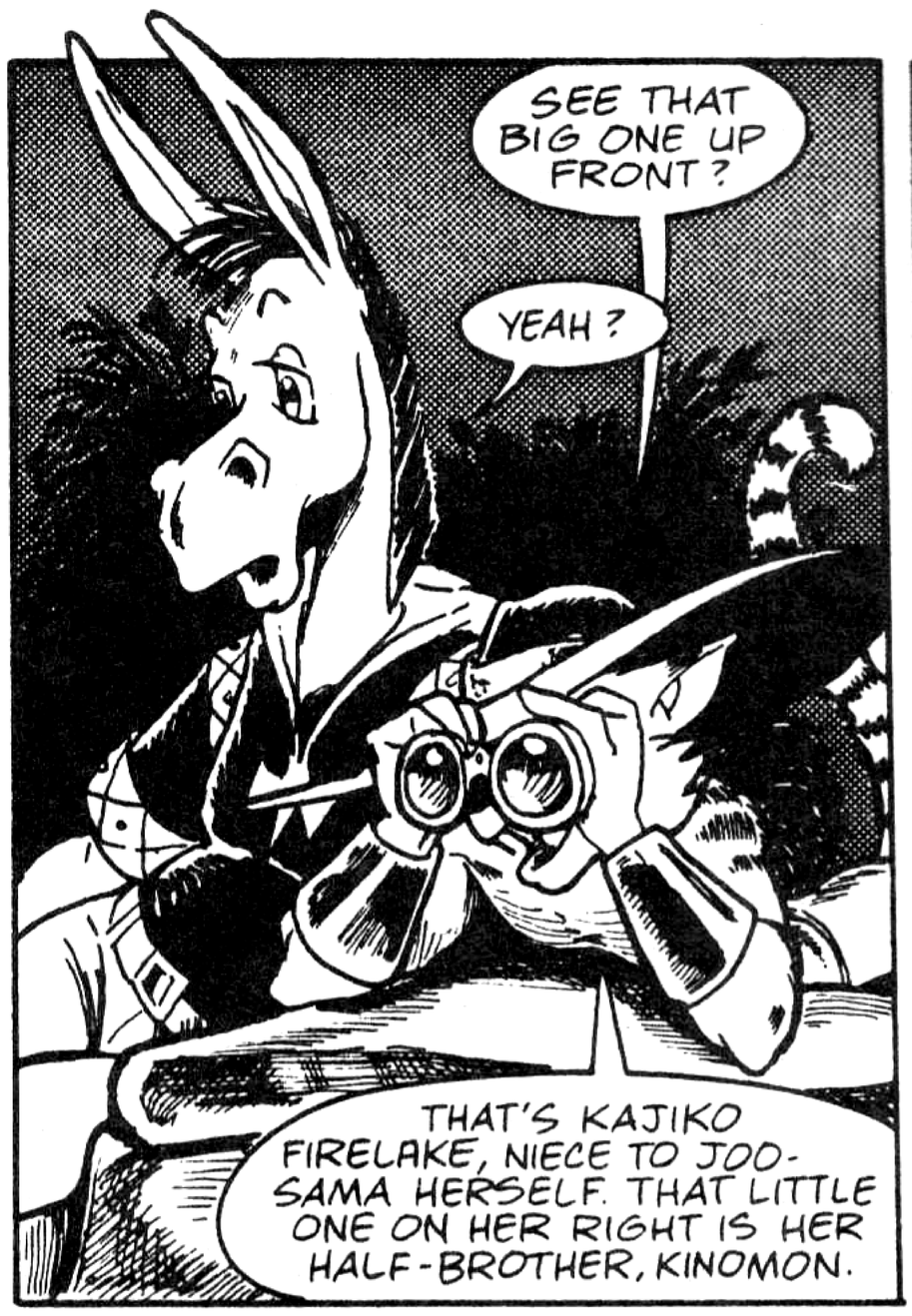
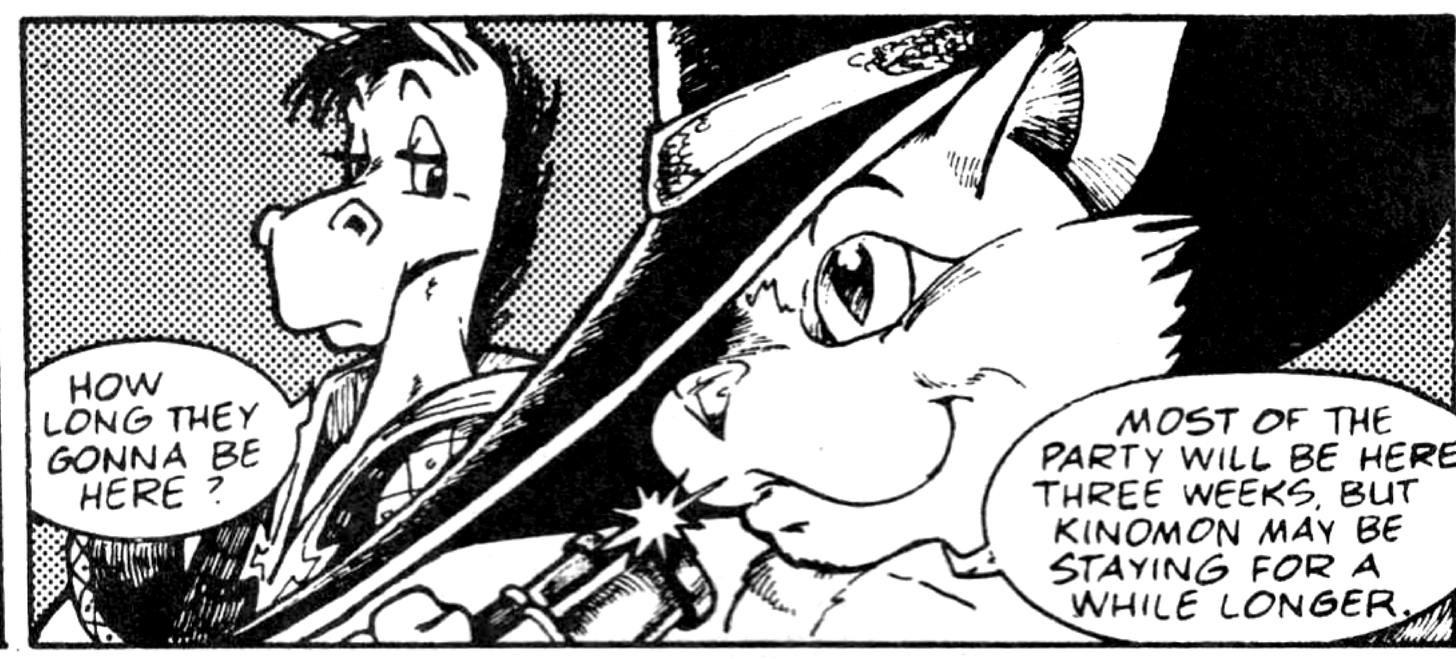

WHAT'S THE COMMOTION ABOUT ?
THE GOLDEN DRAGONS OF THE EAST HAVE RETURNED.

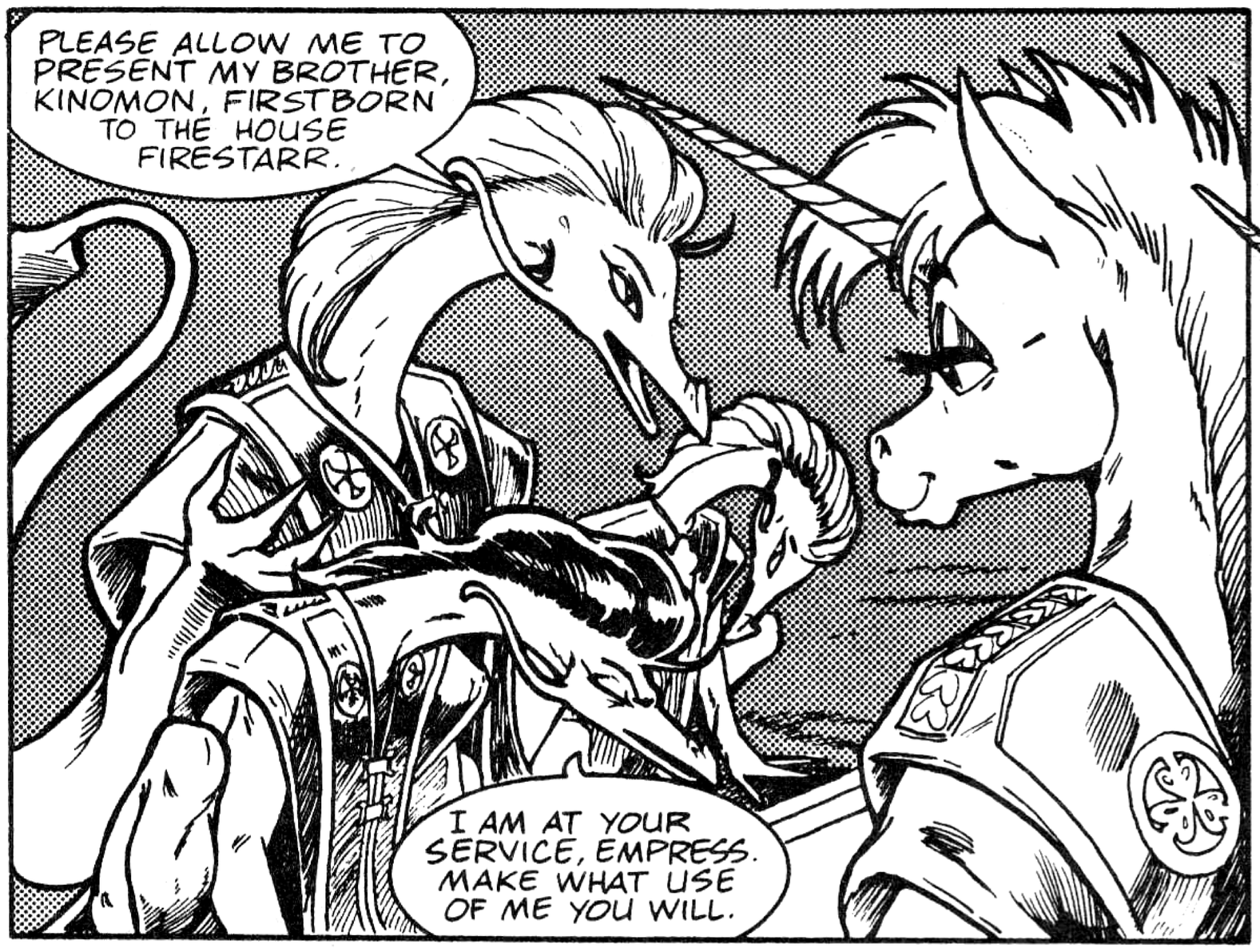

SEE THAT BIG ONE UP FRONT?
YEAH?
THAT'S KAJIKO FIRELAKE, NIECE TO JOO-SAMA HERSELF. THAT LITTLE ONE ON HER RIGHT IS HER HALF-BROTHER, KINOMON.

HOW DO YOU KNOW?
HE'S THE ONLY MALE. FEMALES HAVE RED CRESTS. MALES HAVE BLACK. IT'S THE WAY TO TELL YOUNG ONES APART.

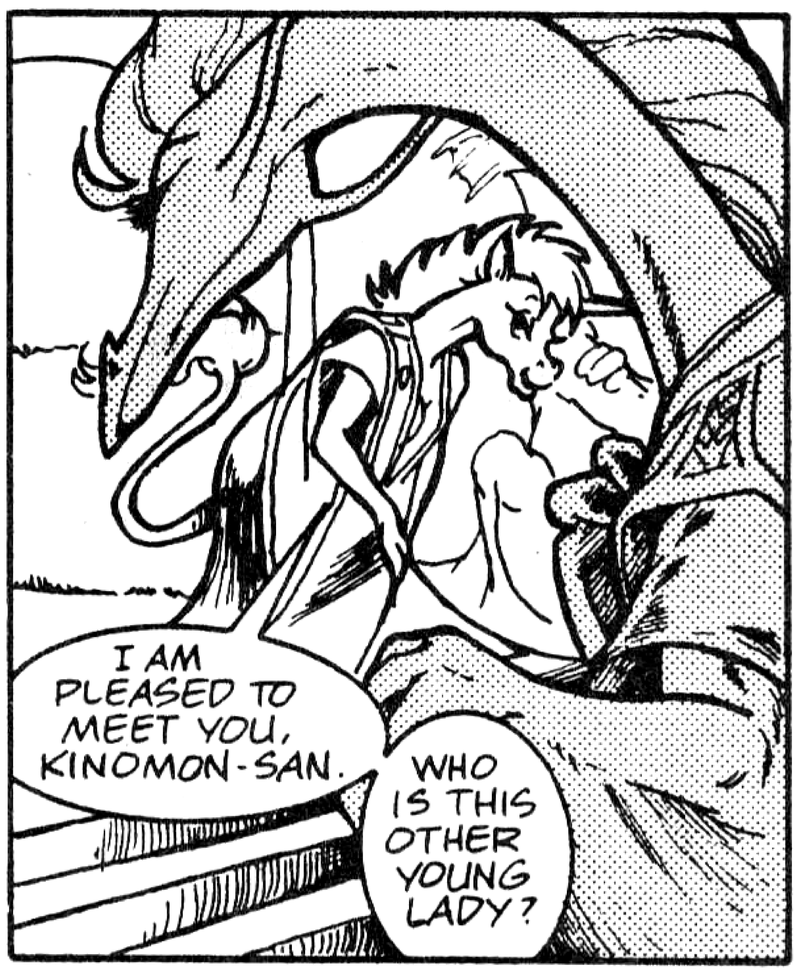

HOW LONG THEY GONNA BE HERE?
MOST OF THE PARTY WILL BE HERE THREE WEEKS, BUT KINOMON MAY BE STAYING FOR A WHILE LONGER.

RUMOR HAS IT THAT EMPRESS ALICIA HAS REQUESTED A GOLDEN WARRIOR TO HELP CAPTAIN REGINALD PLUME WITH PALACE SECURITY. SEEMS THEY'VE HAD A COUPLE BREAK-INS LATELY.
DO TELL...

I AM KAJIKO FIRELAKE, HEIR DESIGNATE OF THE GOLDEN MOTHER. IN HER NAME, I GREET YOU.
I AM HONORED, PRINCESS KAJIKO.


PLEASE ALLOW ME TO PRESENT MY BROTHER, KINOMON, FIRSTBORN TO THE HOUSE FIRESTARR.
I AM AT YOUR SERVICE, EMPRESS. MAKE WHAT USE OF ME YOU WILL.

STEADY, GIRL. LET'S NOT FORGET THIS IS AN AFFAIR OF STATE.


I AM PLEASED TO MEET YOU, KINOMON-SAN.
WHO IS THIS OTHER YOUNG LADY?

THIS IS FIREPETAL. MY ATTENDANT AND KINOMON'S BETROTHED.
I AM HONORED.

BE WELCOME TO THE HOUSE OF ALLYNRUD. PLEASE FOLLOW THESE ATTENDENTS. THEY WILL SEE TO YOUR EVERY NEED.

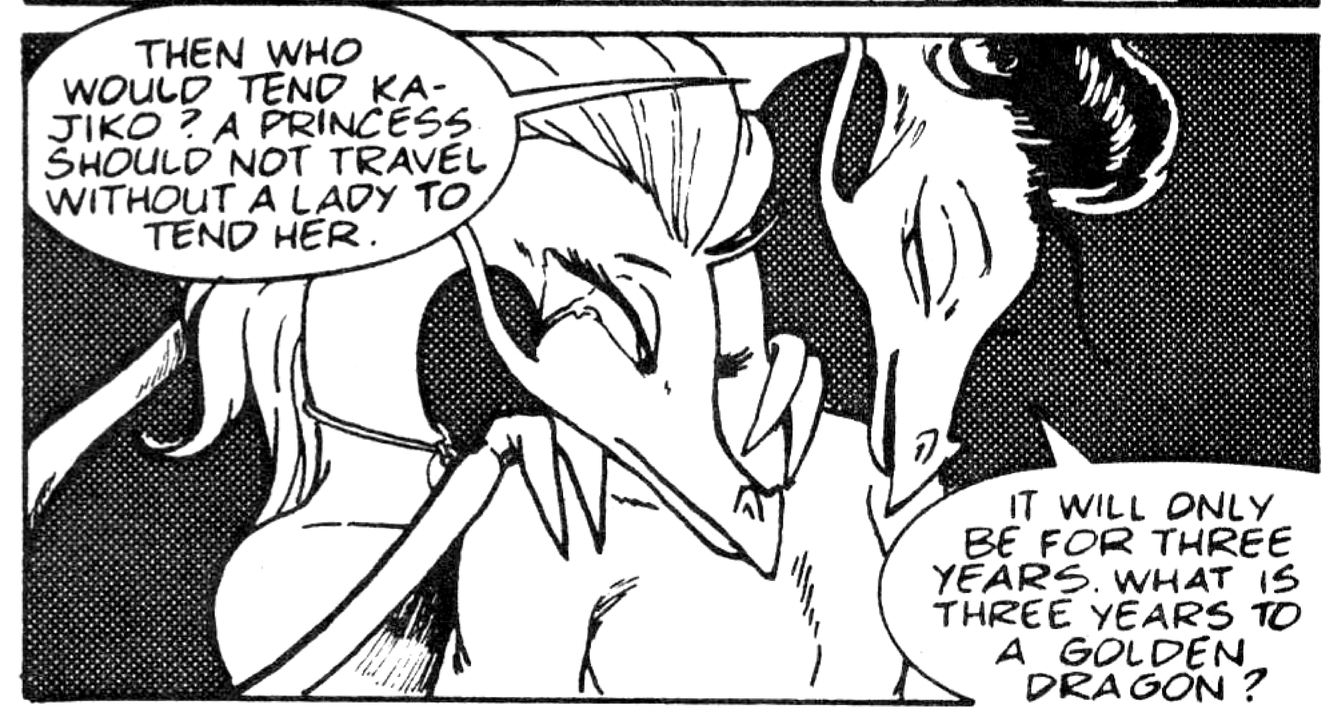
DON'T TELL ME YOU FIND PRINCESS KAJIKO *INTERESTING*, DEAR, STUFFY OCTAVIUS!

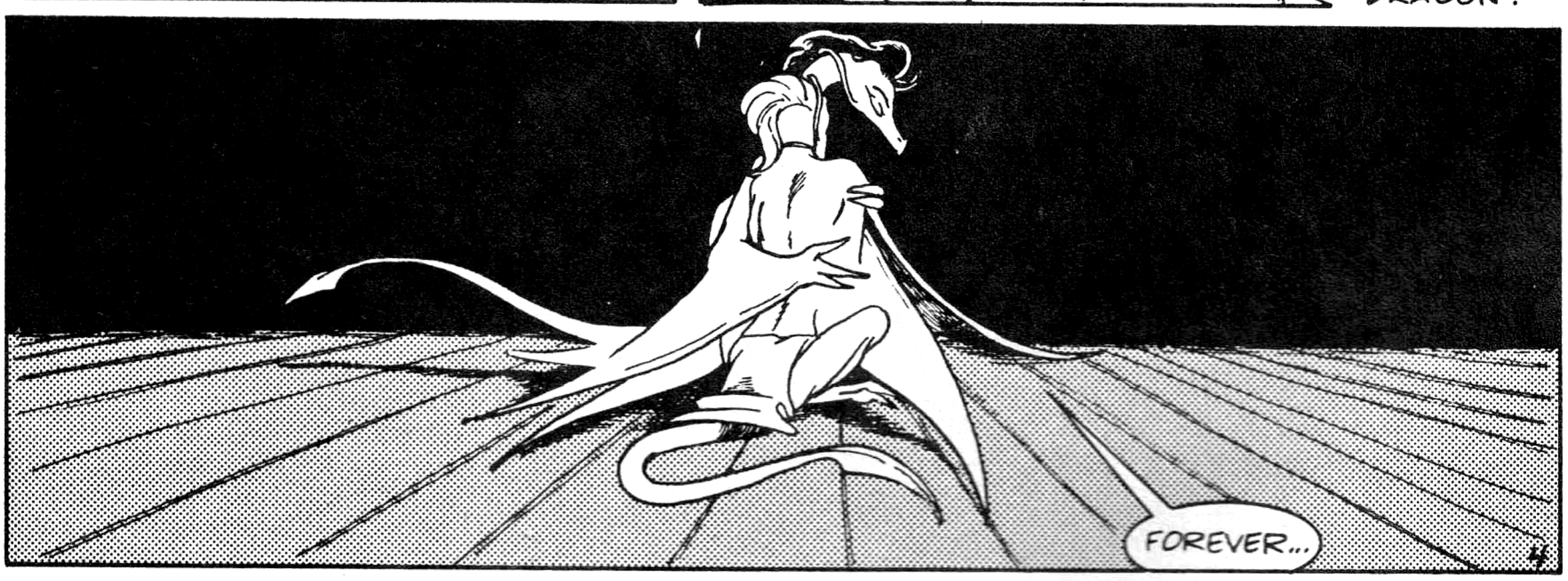
DON'T BE SILLY. MY *INTEREST* IS PURELY DIPLOMATIC!
OF COURSE IT IS! TELL ME: HOW LONG *HAS* IT BEEN SINCE YOU LAST SAW A FEMALE DRAGON...?

SIGH!

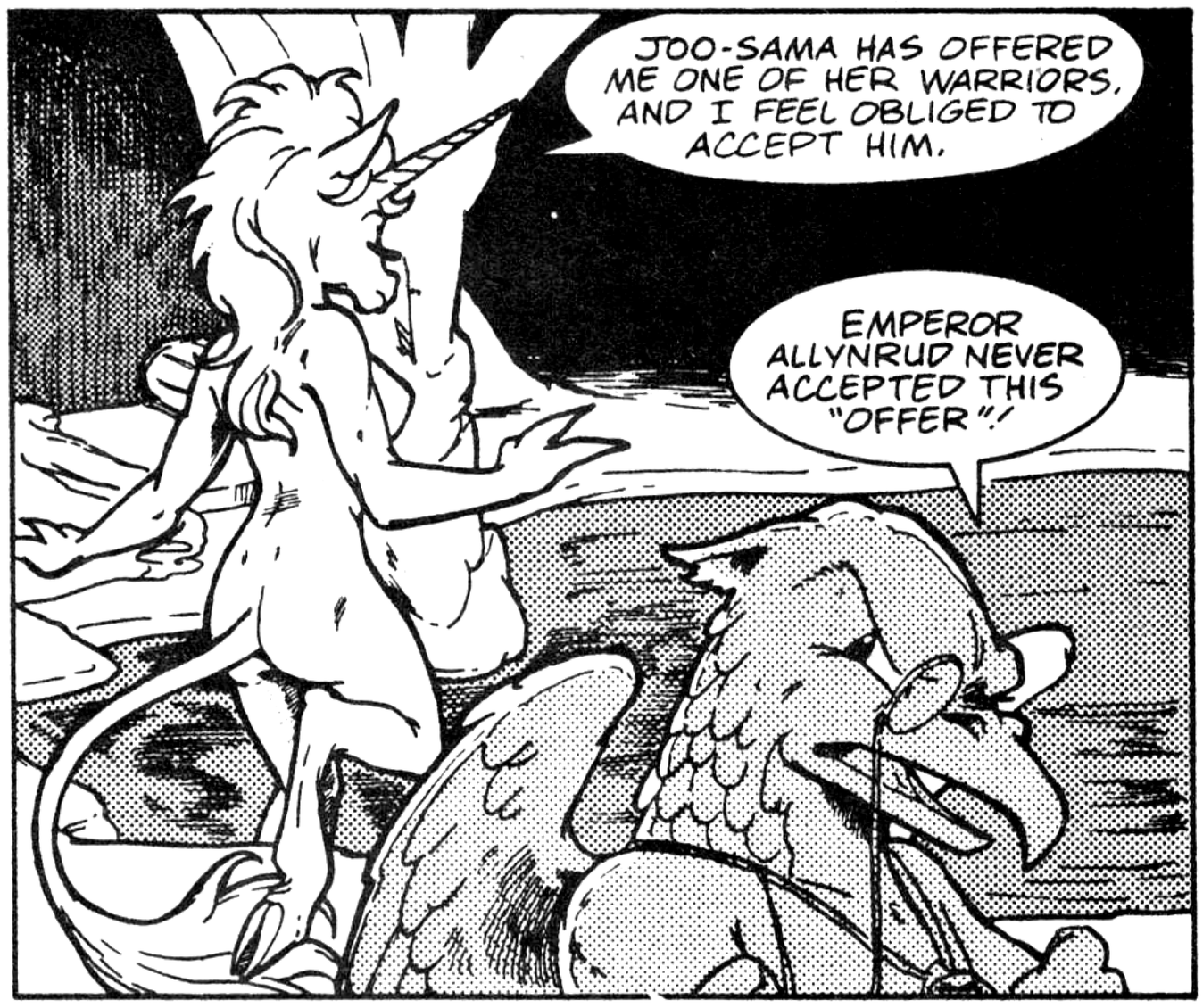
YOU TIRE SO EASILY, FIREPETAL-CHAN. A FINE, STRONG FEMALE LIKE YOU.
I AM WEARY OF WAITING, KINO-CHAN. WE ARE PROMISED. WE SHOULD BE WED.

WE WERE ALSO VERY YOUNG. YOU HAVE NOT TOUCHED YOUR SECOND CENTURY. I AM NOT YET A CENTURY.
IF WE WERE WED, I COULD REMAIN HERE WITH YOU.


THEN WHO WOULD TEND KA-JIKO? A PRINCESS SHOULD NOT TRAVEL WITHOUT A LADY TO TEND HER.
IT WILL ONLY BE FOR THREE YEARS. WHAT IS THREE YEARS TO A GOLDEN DRAGON?


FOREVER...

THIS IS NOT NECESSARY!
IT IS A MATTER OF COURTESY.


JOO-SAMA HAS OFFERED ME ONE OF HER WARRIORS, AND I FEEL OBLIGED TO ACCEPT HIM.
EMPEROR ALLYNRUD NEVER ACCEPTED THIS "OFFER"!

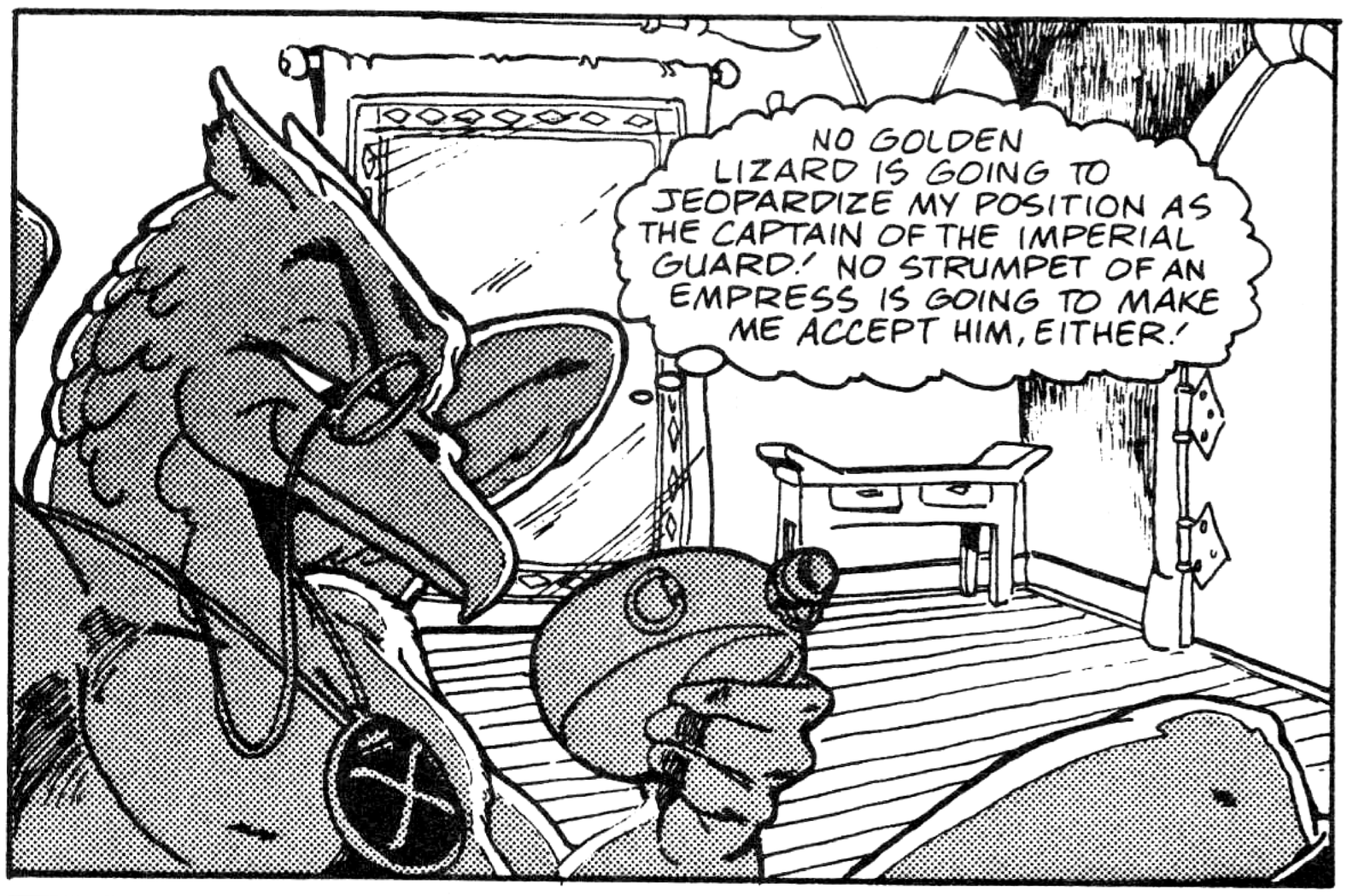
MY FATHER IS DEAD, CAPTAIN PLUME! AND TIMES CHANGE... I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D MIND THE HELP, GIVEN THE NUMBER OF INTRUDERS WHO'VE FOUND THEIR WAY INTO THE PALACE RECENTLY...

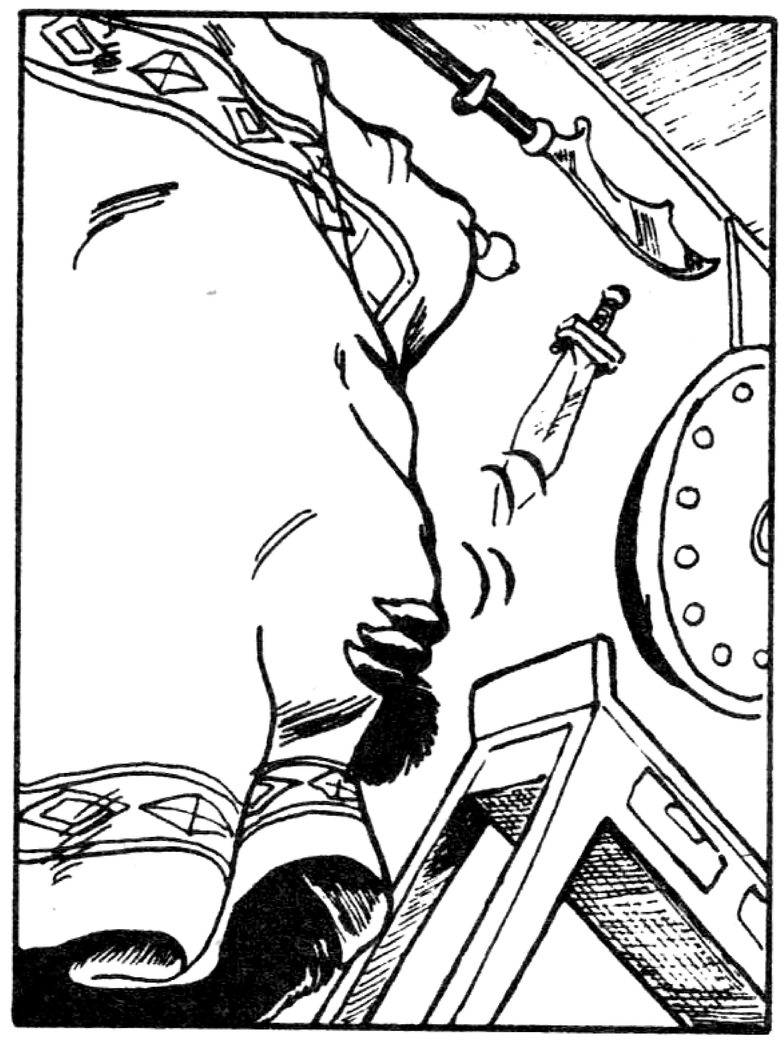
I WAS ORDERED NOT TO HARM LE FAUVE! IF I'M NOT ALLOWED TO CONDUCT SECURITY AS I SEE FIT, HOW, THEN, IS THAT HATCHLING KINOMON GOING TO HELP?

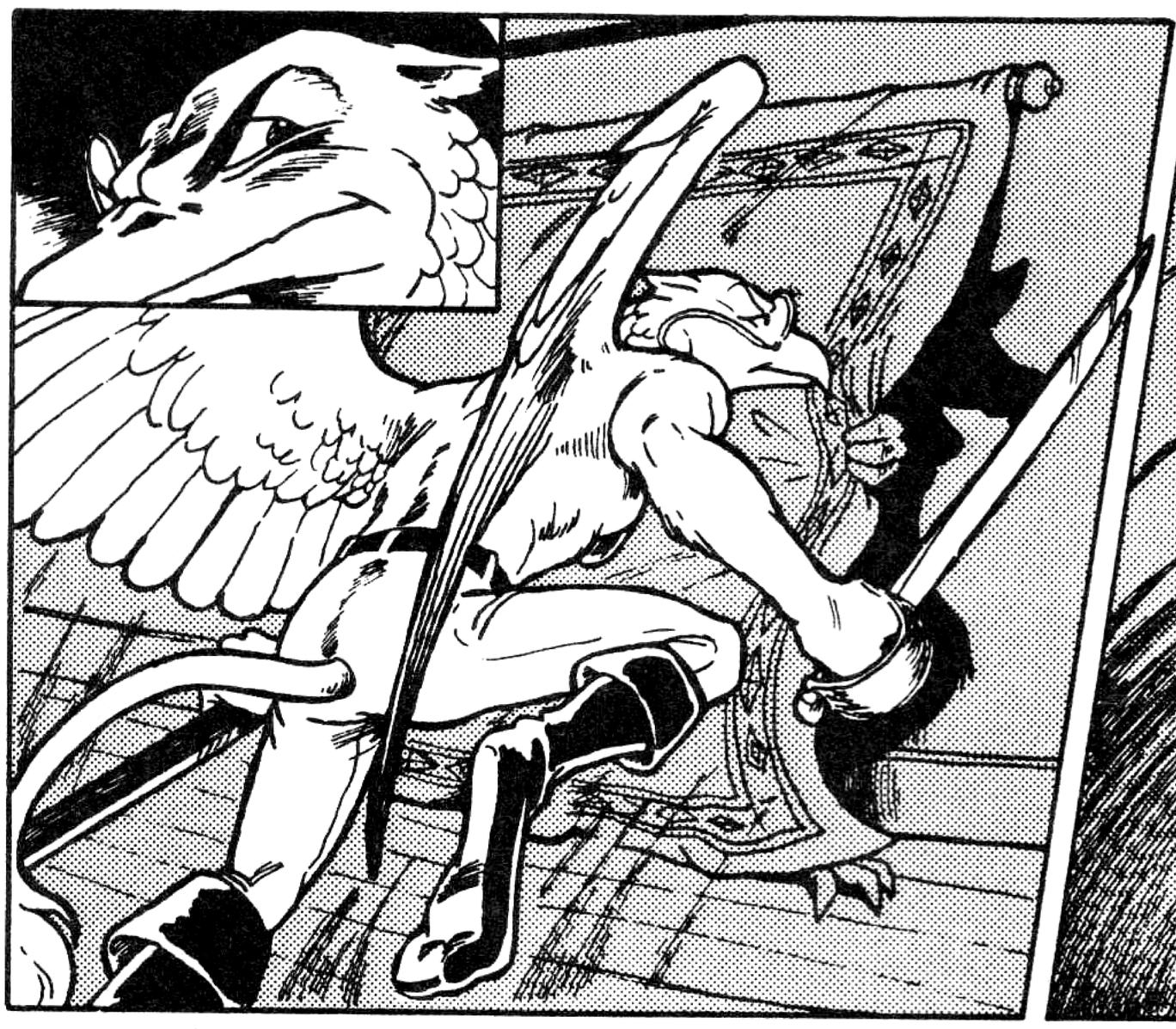
THAT "HATCHLING" IS ONE OF THE FINEST FLIERS IN THE GOLDEN REALM!
BUT, YOUR MAJESTY...!
ENOUGH, CAPTAIN! AT THE CEREMONY TONIGHT, KINOMON FIRESTARR WILL BE ENSTATED AS AN OFFICER OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD! AND YOU WILL BE OBLIGED TO ACCEPT HIM!

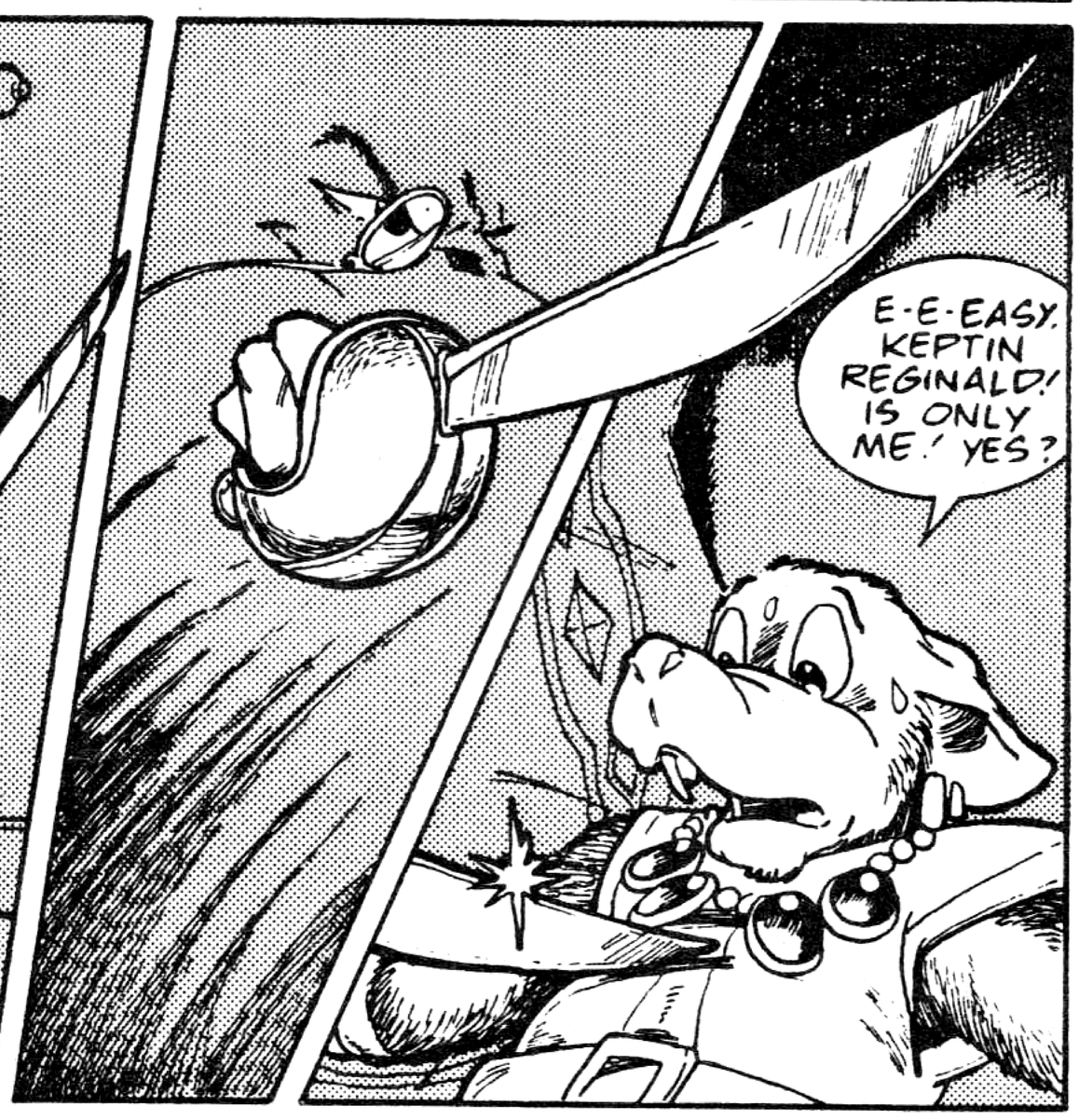
AS I SHALL BE "OBLIGED" TO EXPRESS MY DISSATISFACTION!
THIS IS YOUR RIGHT. I TRUST YOU WILL ALSO FEEL OBLIGATED TO EXPLAIN WHAT YOU WERE DOING WITH A JAR OF BASILISK VENOM AFTER A POISONING ATTEMPT WAS MADE ON ONE OF MY GUESTS...

I KNOW NOTHING OF THAT, EMPRESS ALICIA! I WAS WRONGFULLY ACCUSED!
OF COURSE YOU WERE! I NEVER MEANT TO IMPLY ANYTHING MORE. YOU MAY GO NOW...


NO GOLDEN LIZARD IS GOING TO JEOPARDIZE MY POSITION AS THE CAPTAIN OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD! NO STRUMPET OF AN EMPRESS IS GOING TO MAKE ME ACCEPT HIM, EITHER!



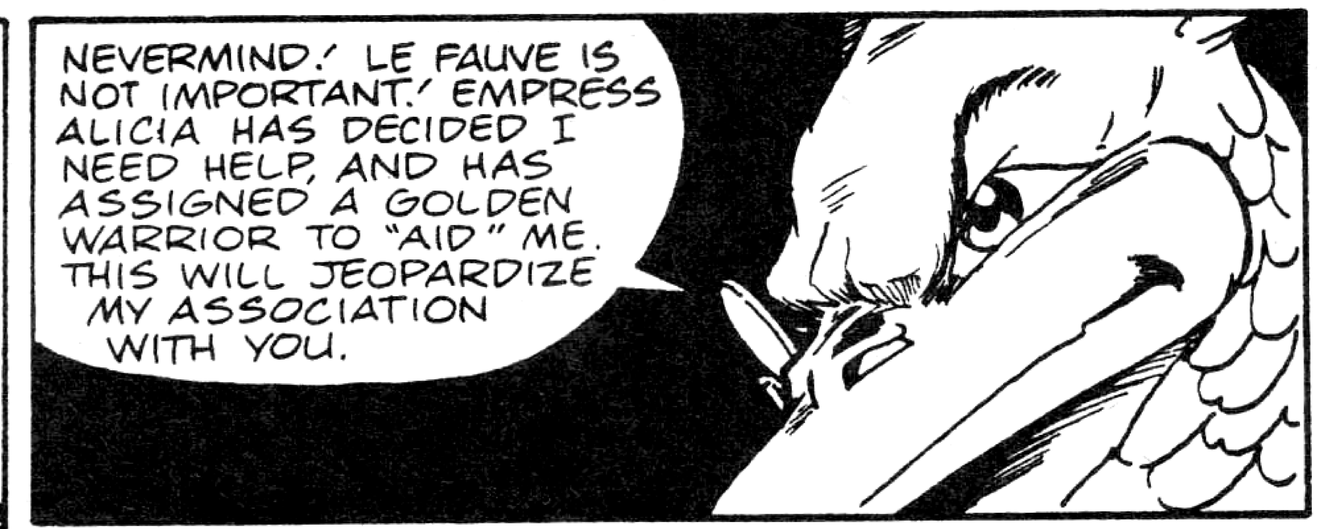


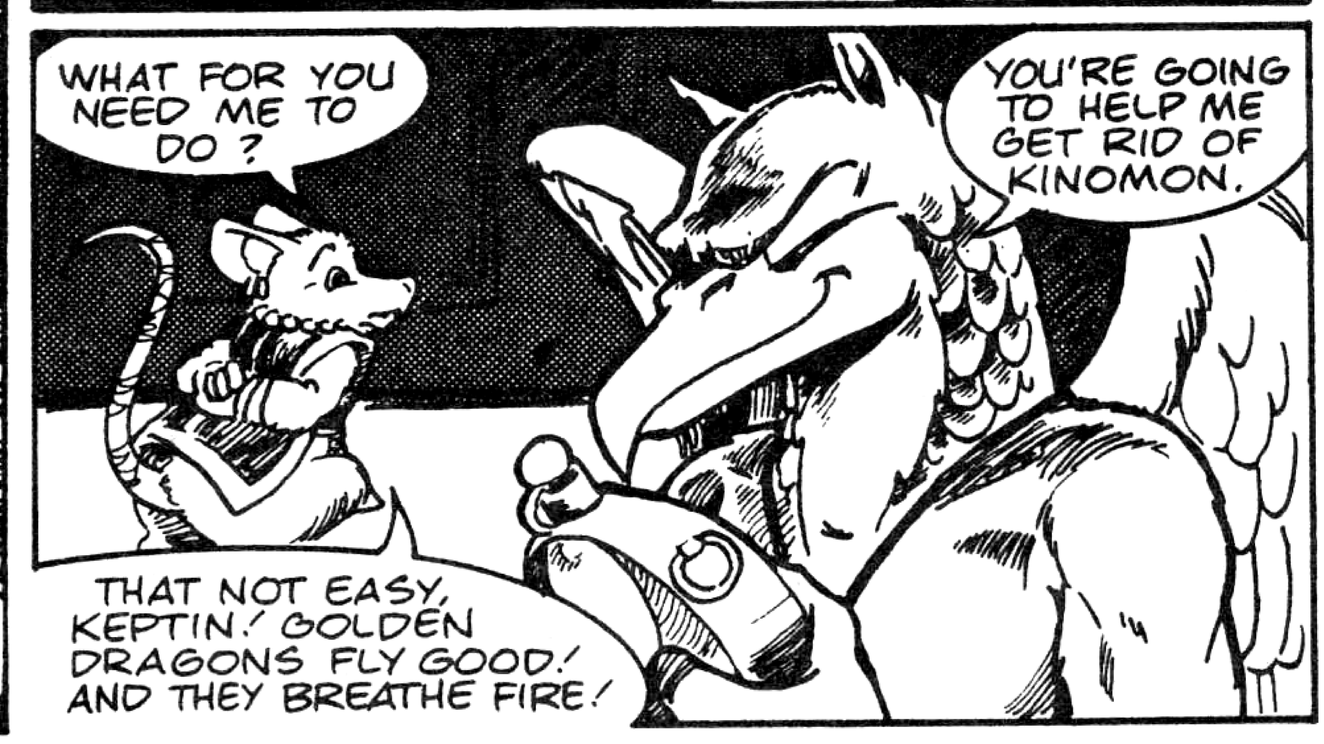

E-E-EASY, KEPTIN REGINALD! IS ONLY ME! YES?

SCRATCH, YOU IDIOT! I TRUST YOU WEREN'T SEEN ENTERING THE PALACE...?
NO, KEPTIN. I COME BY TUNNEL. JUST LIKE YOU SAY.

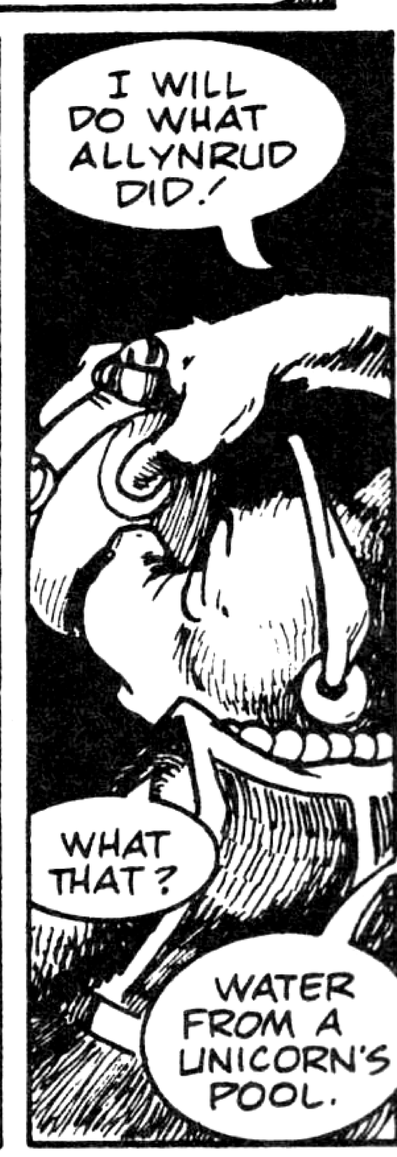
THAT WEASLE, KVETCH. HE SAY IT IMPORTANT.
IT IS IMPORTANT.
TELL ME, SCRATCH, DO YOU LIKE THE GOLD I'M PAYING YOU?
OH, YES, KEPTIN! VERY MUCH!

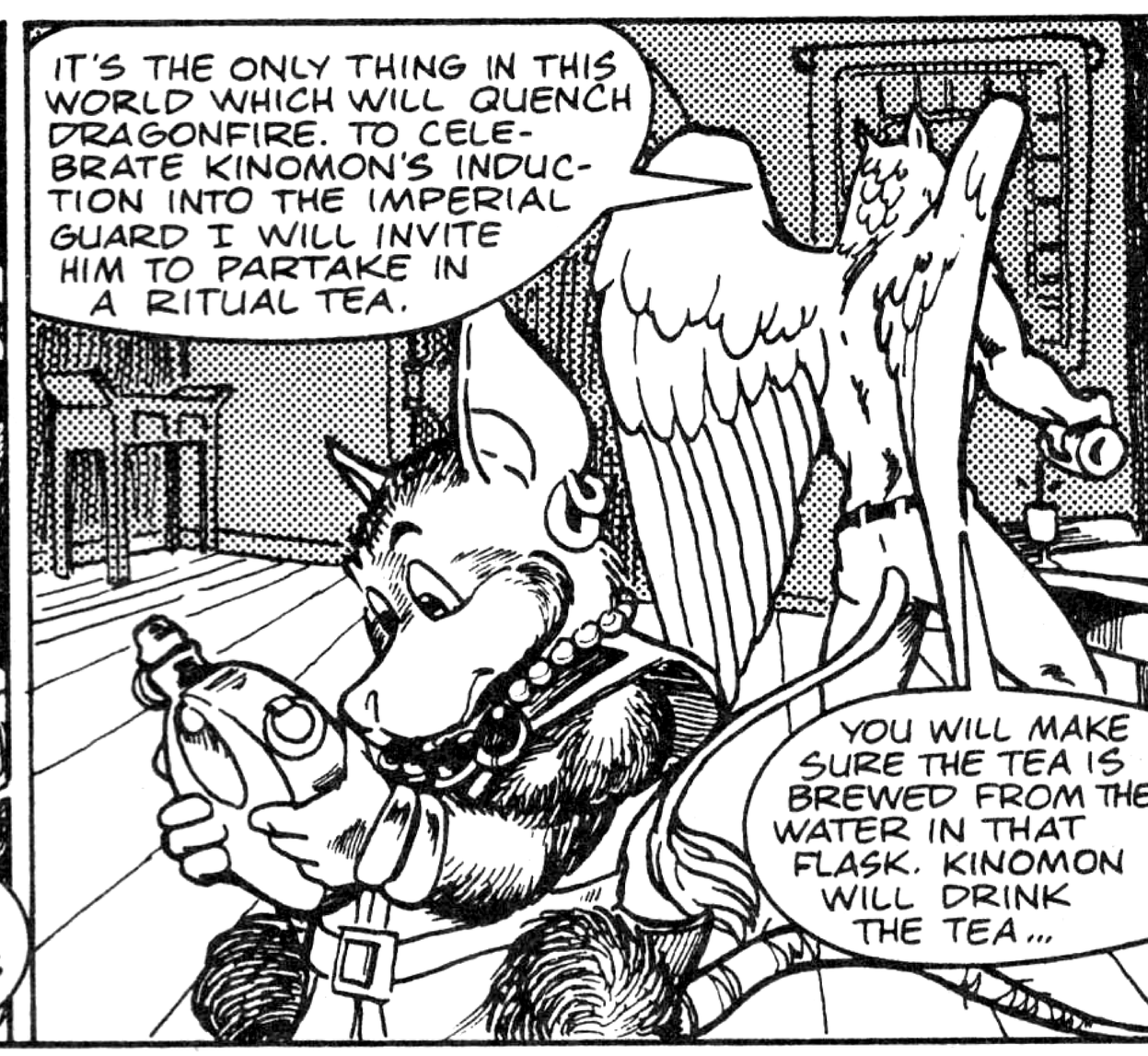
IF YOU WISH IT TO CONTINUE, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO HELP ME, AND NOT BOTCH IT LIKE THE LAST TIME.
I NO BOTCH JOB ON STUPID CAT.! I GIVE YOU BASILISK VENOM, JUST LIKE YOU ASK.!


NEVERMIND.! LE FAUVE IS NOT IMPORTANT.! EMPRESS ALICIA HAS DECIDED I NEED HELP, AND HAS ASSIGNED A GOLDEN WARRIOR TO "AID" ME. THIS WILL JEOPARDIZE MY ASSOCIATION WITH YOU.

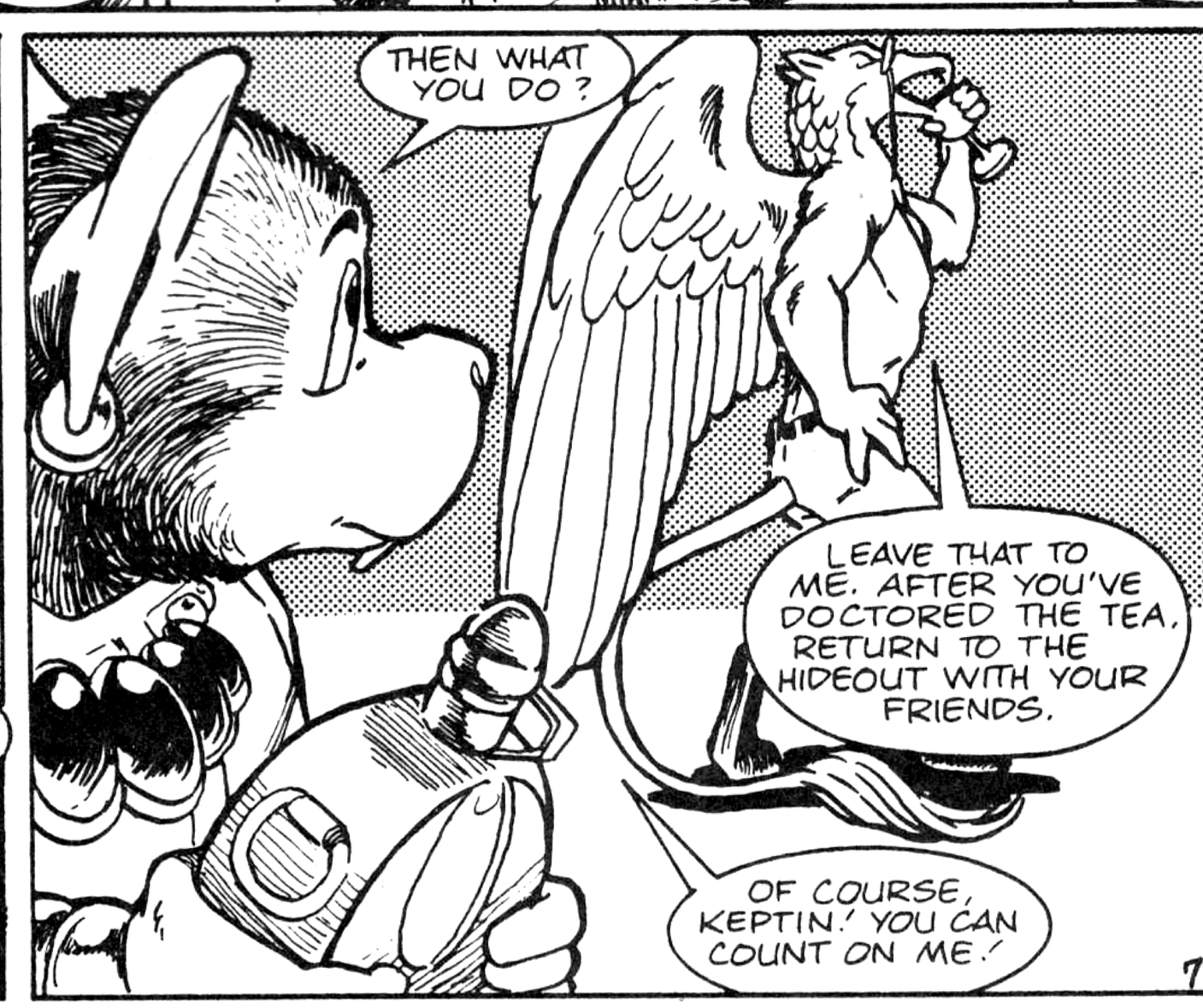

WHAT FOR YOU NEED ME TO DO ?
YOU'RE GOING TO HELP ME GET RID OF KINOMON.
THAT NOT EASY, KEPTIN.! GOLDEN DRAGONS FLY GOOD.! AND THEY BREATHE FIRE.!

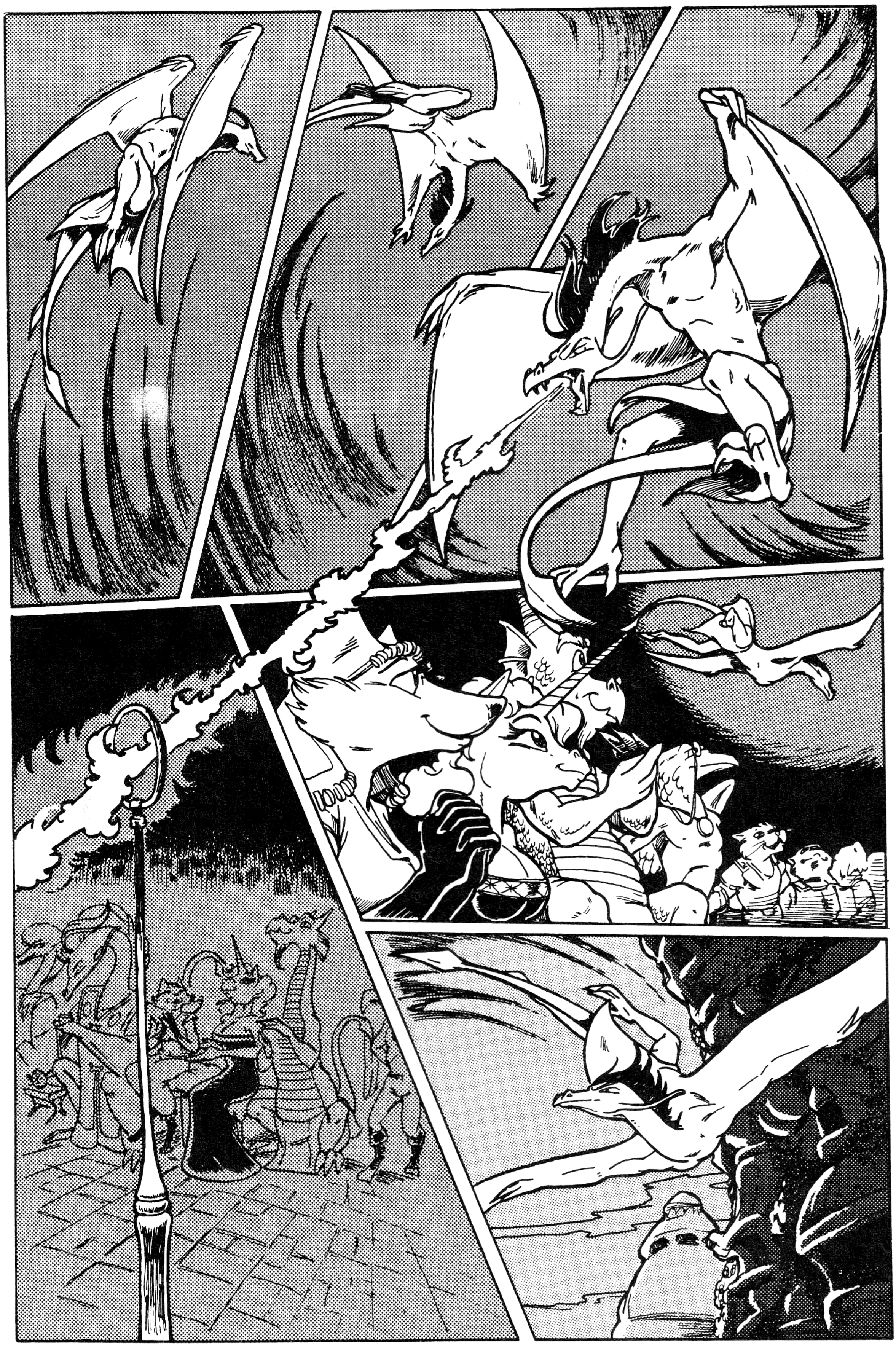
TRUE, BUT A GOLDEN DRAGON ISN'T AN EFFECTIVE FIGHTER WITHOUT ITS FIRE. AND KINOMON IS TOO YOUNG TO FIGHT WITH HIS CLAWS ALONE...
HOW YOU PUT OUT DRAGON'S FIRE ? WATER NO GOOD.


I WILL DO WHAT ALLYNRUD DID.!
WHAT THAT ?
WATER FROM A UNICORN'S POOL.

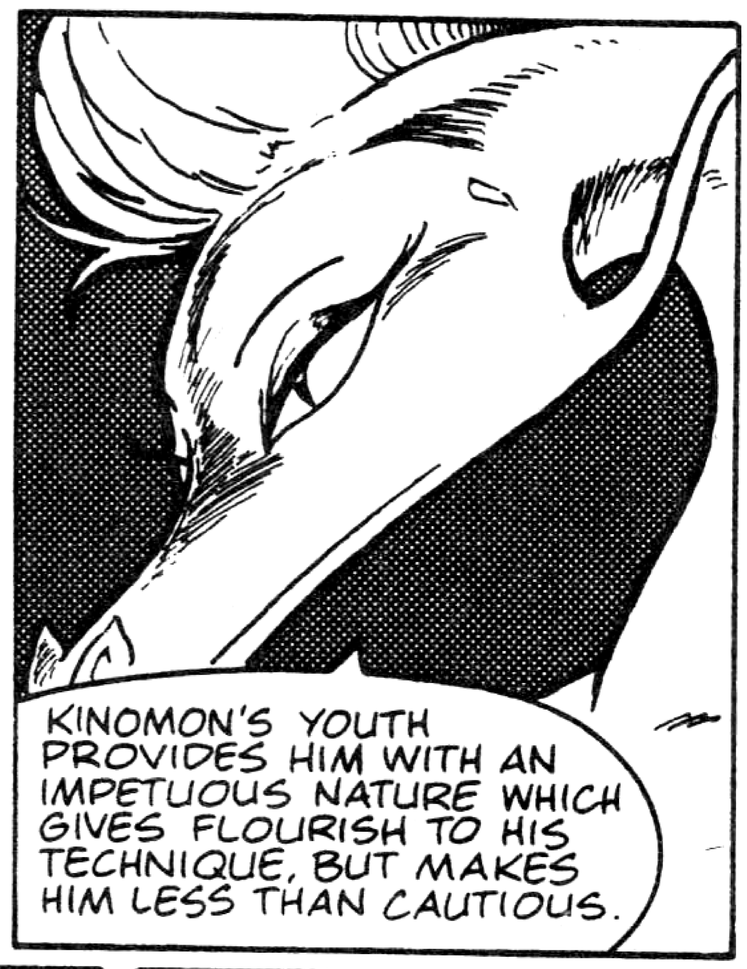

IT'S THE ONLY THING IN THIS WORLD WHICH WILL QUENCH DRAGONFIRE. TO CELEBRATE KINOMON'S INDUCTION INTO THE IMPERIAL GUARD I WILL INVITE HIM TO PARTAKE IN A RITUAL TEA.
YOU WILL MAKE SURE THE TEA IS BREWED FROM THE WATER IN THAT FLASK. KINOMON WILL DRINK THE TEA...

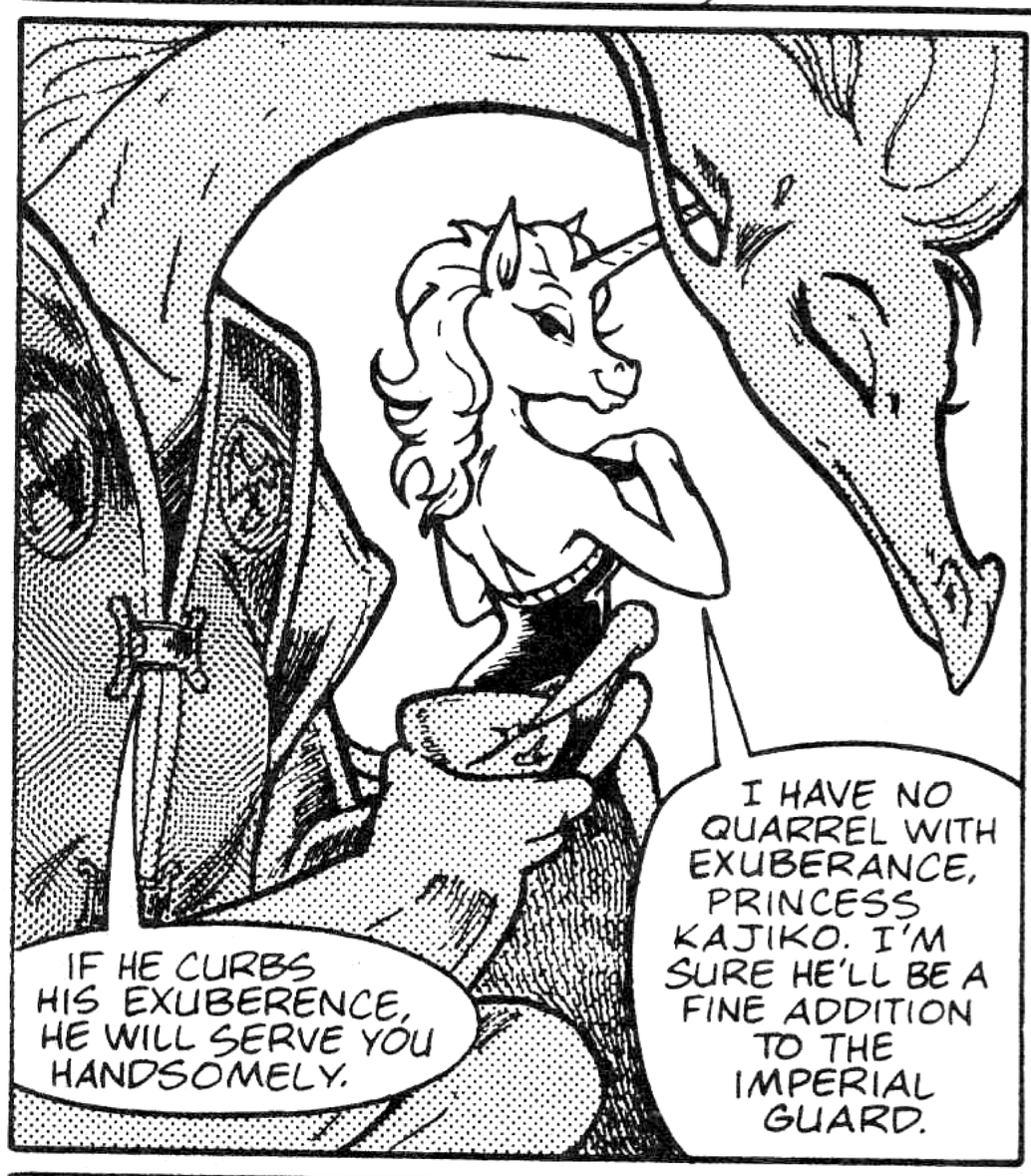
AND YOU JUMP DRAGON, YES ?
OF COURSE NOT.! THAT WOULD BE STUPID.!

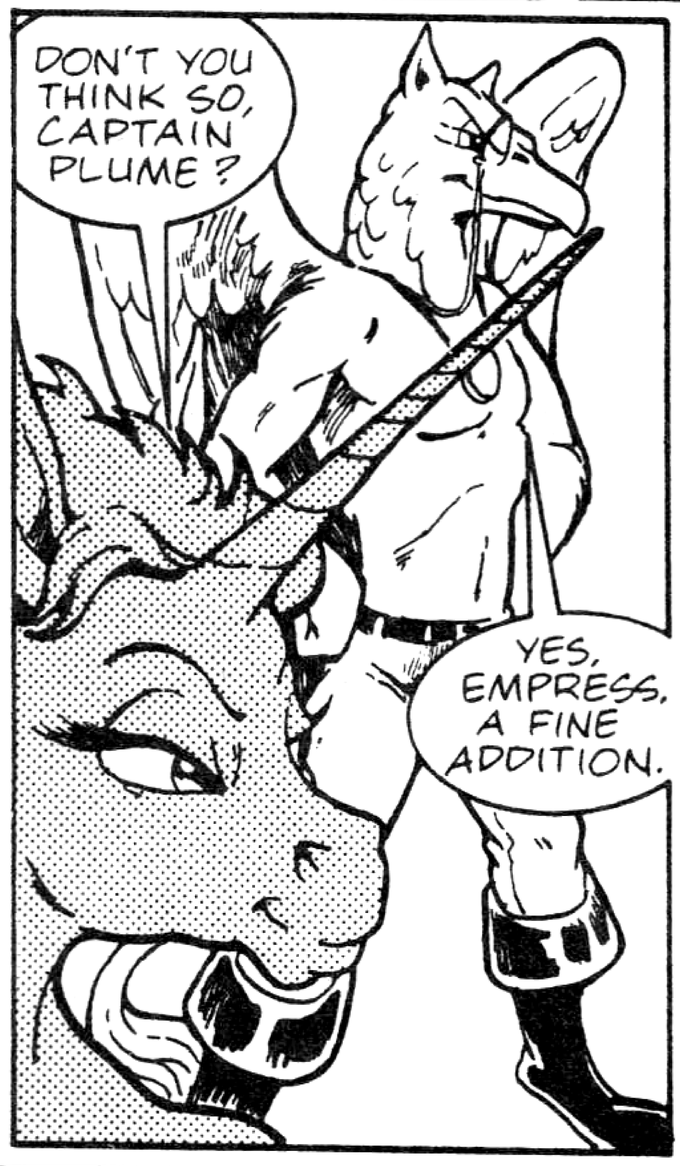

THEN WHAT YOU DO ?
LEAVE THAT TO ME. AFTER YOU'VE DOCTORED THE TEA, RETURN TO THE HIDEOUT WITH YOUR FRIENDS.
OF COURSE, KEPTIN.! YOU CAN COUNT ON ME.!



VERY IMPRESSIVE, KINOMON-SAN.! NOW I UNDERSTAND WHY GOLDEN DRAGONS ARE SUCH EXCELLENT WARRIORS.!
THANK YOU, EMPRESS.!


KINOMON'S YOUTH PROVIDES HIM WITH AN IMPETUOUS NATURE WHICH GIVES FLOURISH TO HIS TECHNIQUE, BUT MAKES HIM LESS THAN CAUTIOUS.


I HAVE NO QUARREL WITH EXUBERANCE, PRINCESS KAJIKO. I'M SURE HE'LL BE A FINE ADDITION TO THE IMPERIAL GUARD.
IF HE CURBS HIS EXUBERENCE, HE WILL SERVE YOU HANDSOMELY.


DON'T YOU THINK SO, CAPTAIN PLUME?
YES, EMPRESS, A FINE ADDITION.

HE SEEMS RESIGNED.
TOO RESIGNED. WE'LL HAVE TO WATCH HIM.

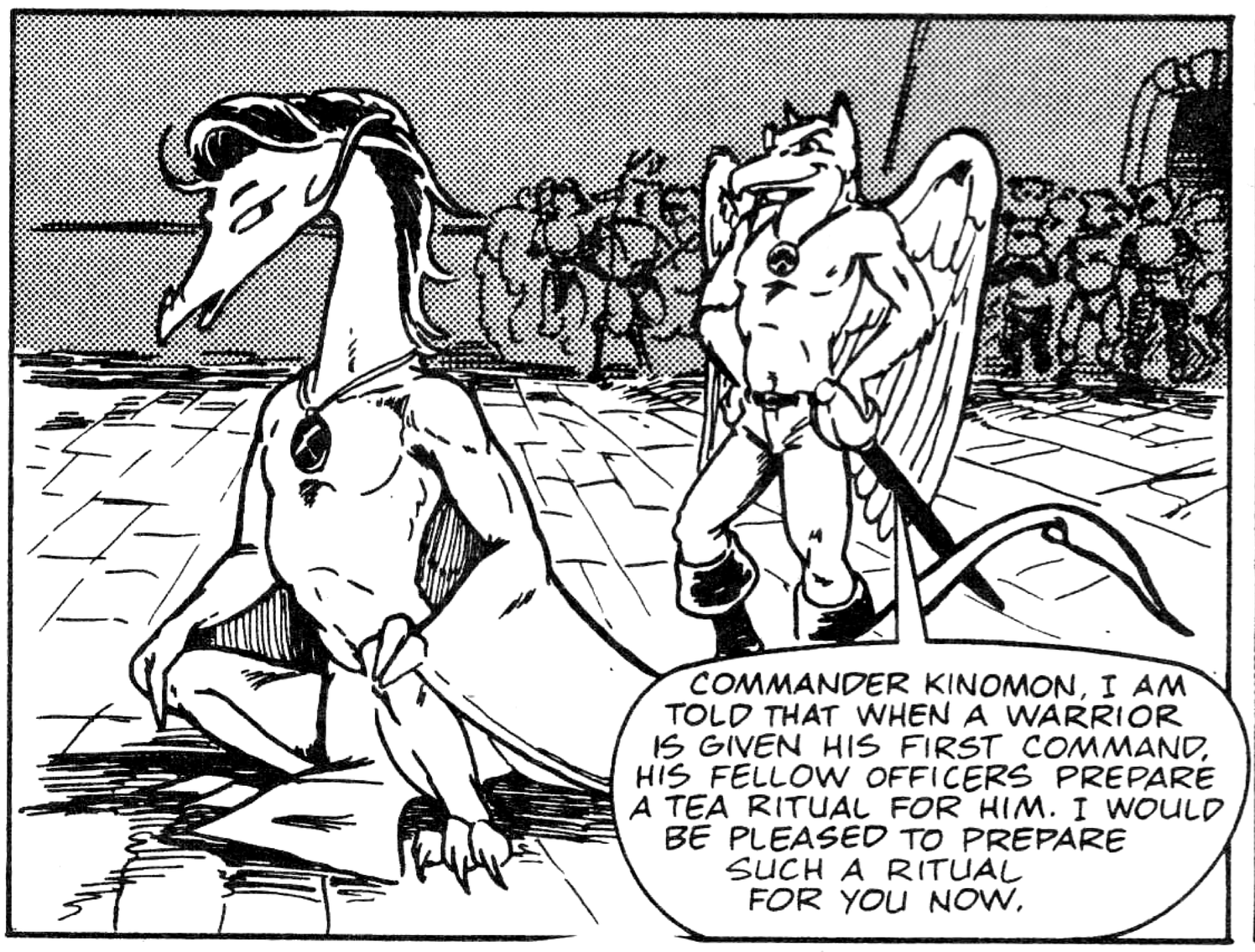
KINOMON FIRESTAR, IN THE NAME OF XANADU AND WITH THE BLESSING OF THE GOLDEN MOTHER, I APPOINT YOU A COMMANDER IN THE IMPERIAL GUARD.!
RISE, COMMANDER KINOMON.!

IS SOMETHING WRONG, LADY FIREPETAL?
I AM FOOLISH! PLEASE, PAY NO ATTENTION...

YOU'LL MISS KINOMON, WON'T YOU? WHY DON'T YOU STAY? WE'D BE HAPPY TO HAVE YOU.
THAT IS NOT POSSIBLE. KINOMON WOULD NOT PERMIT IT. I WOULD DISTRACT HIM.

PERHAPS HE WANTS TO BE DISTRACTED.
NO WARRIOR WANTS TO BE DISTRACTED FROM HIS DUTY. KINOMON'S DUTY IS TO XANADU NOW AND I AM SECONDARY.

I DON'T THINK YOU'RE SECONDARY TO HIM. HE'S GOING TO MISS YOU, TOO.


COMMANDER KINOMON, I AM TOLD THAT WHEN A WARRIOR IS GIVEN HIS FIRST COMMAND, HIS FELLOW OFFICERS PREPARE A TEA RITUAL FOR HIM. I WOULD BE PLEASED TO PREPARE SUCH A RITUAL FOR YOU NOW.

OCTAVIUS!
I HEARD. I DON'T THINK THERE'S CAUSE FOR CONCERN. TEA RITUAL IS A PUBLIC CEREMONY. PLUME WON'T EVEN SERVE THE TEA. THAT'S DONE BY ATTENDENTS.

I WOULD BE HONORED TO ACCEPT YOUR KIND OFFER, CAPTAIN-SAN. I ASK ONLY THAT LADY FIREPETAL BE PERMITTED TO ATTEND ME.
AS LADY FATIMA WILL ATTEND ME.
AND WITH THE EMPRESS' PERMISSION, OF COURSE!
OF COURSE, CAPTAIN. IT'S A SPLENDID IDEA!
I'LL FETCH FRESH WATER FOR THE TEA, EMPRESS.
I TOAST YOUR HEALTH, COMMANDER. MAY OUR ASSOCIATION BE GLORIOUS IN BATTLE!
AND TRANQUIL IN PEACE...
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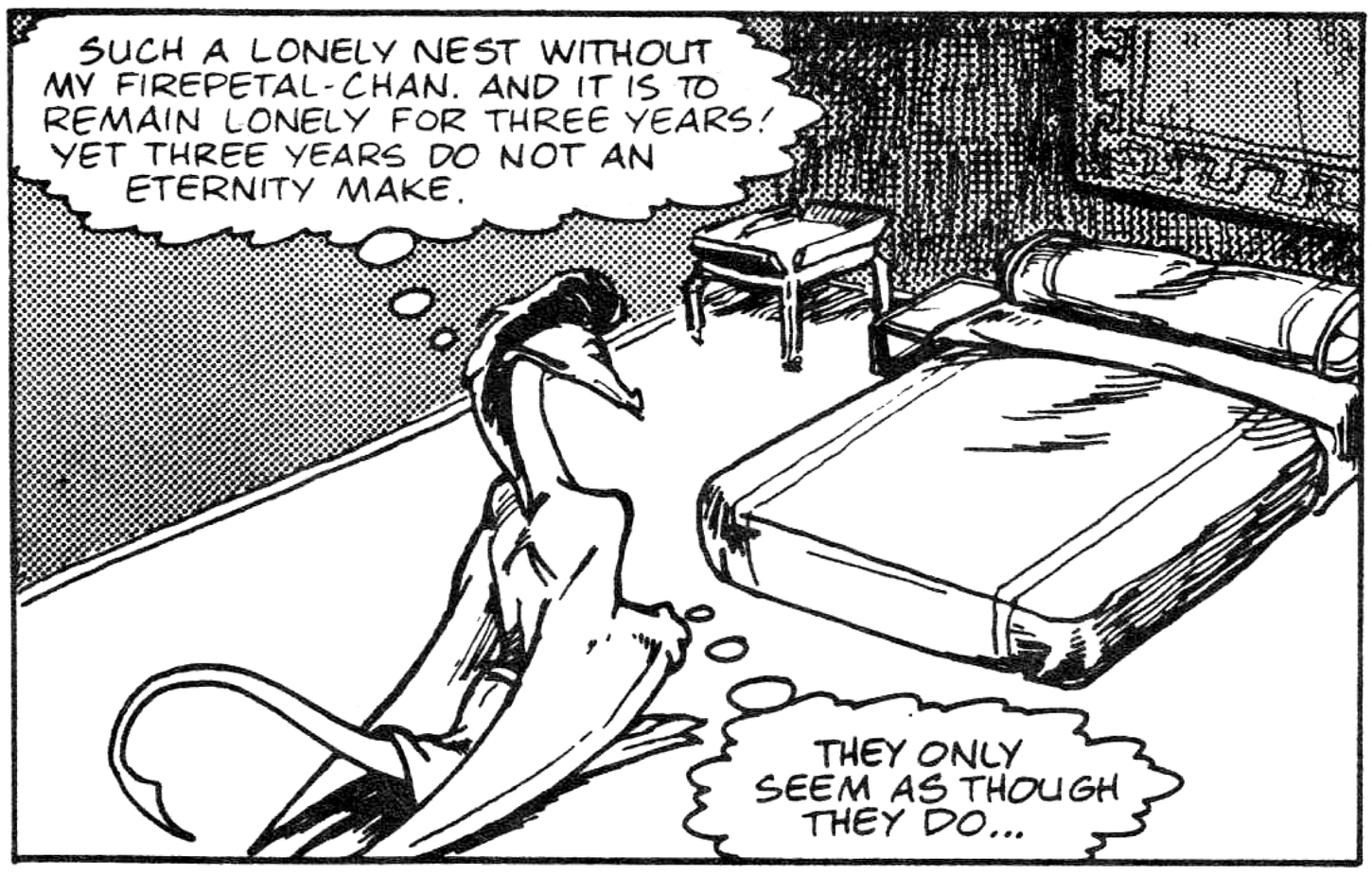
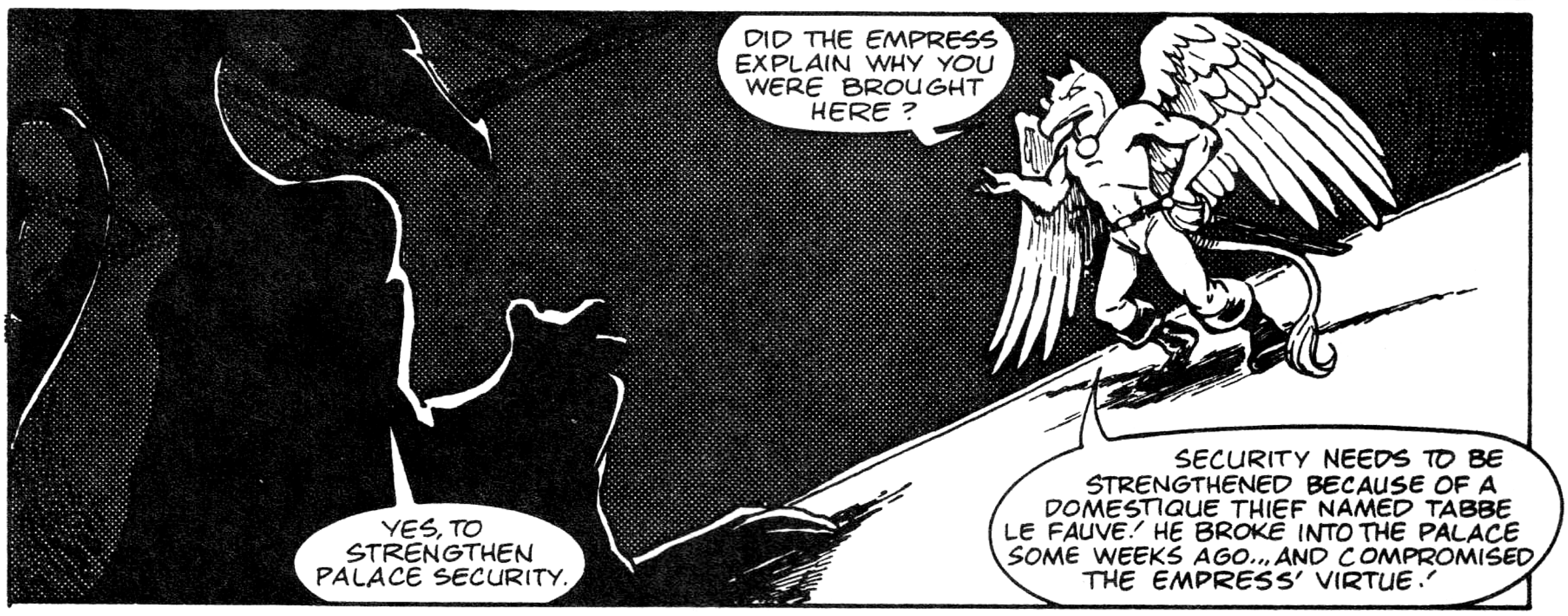
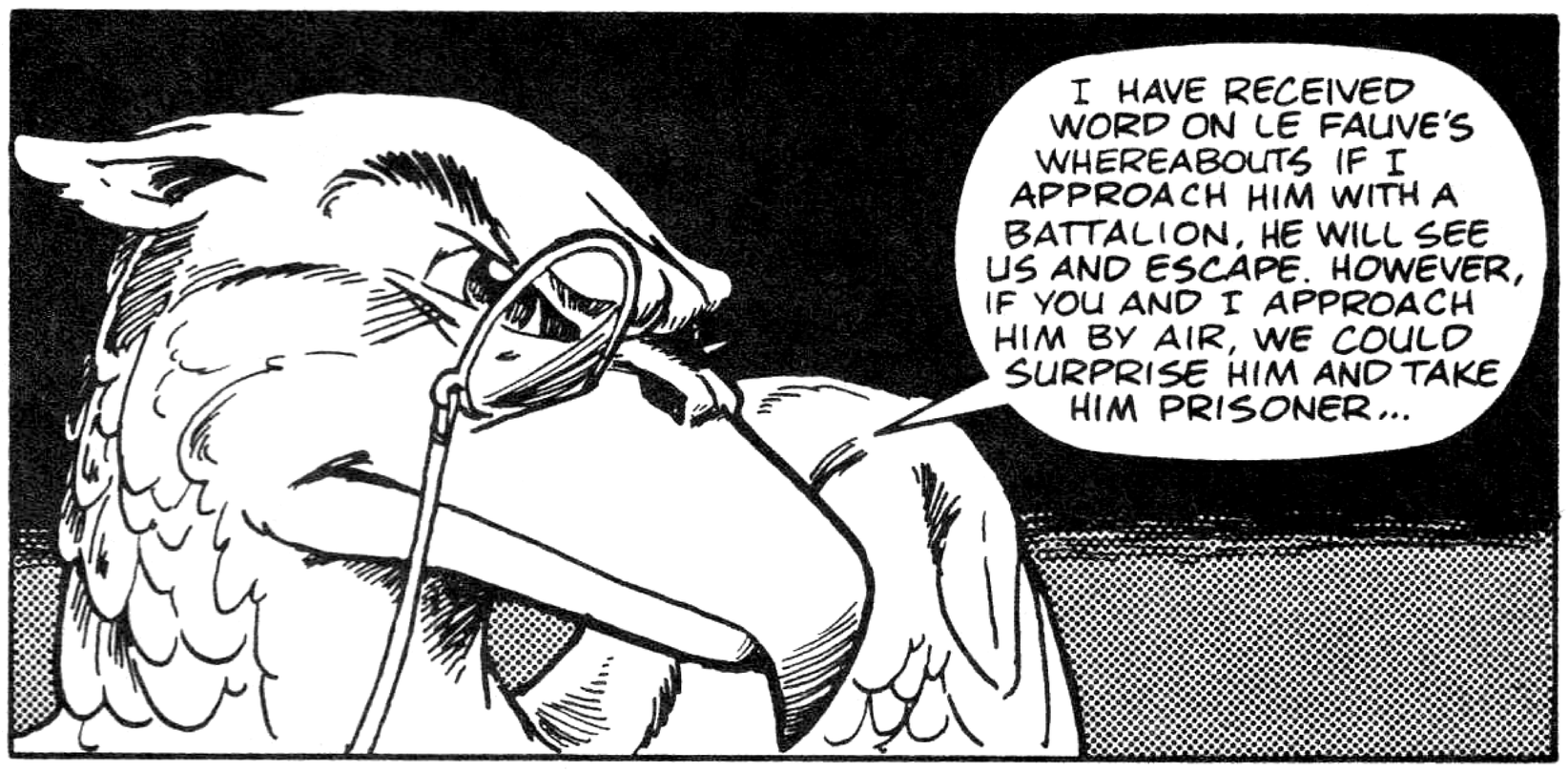
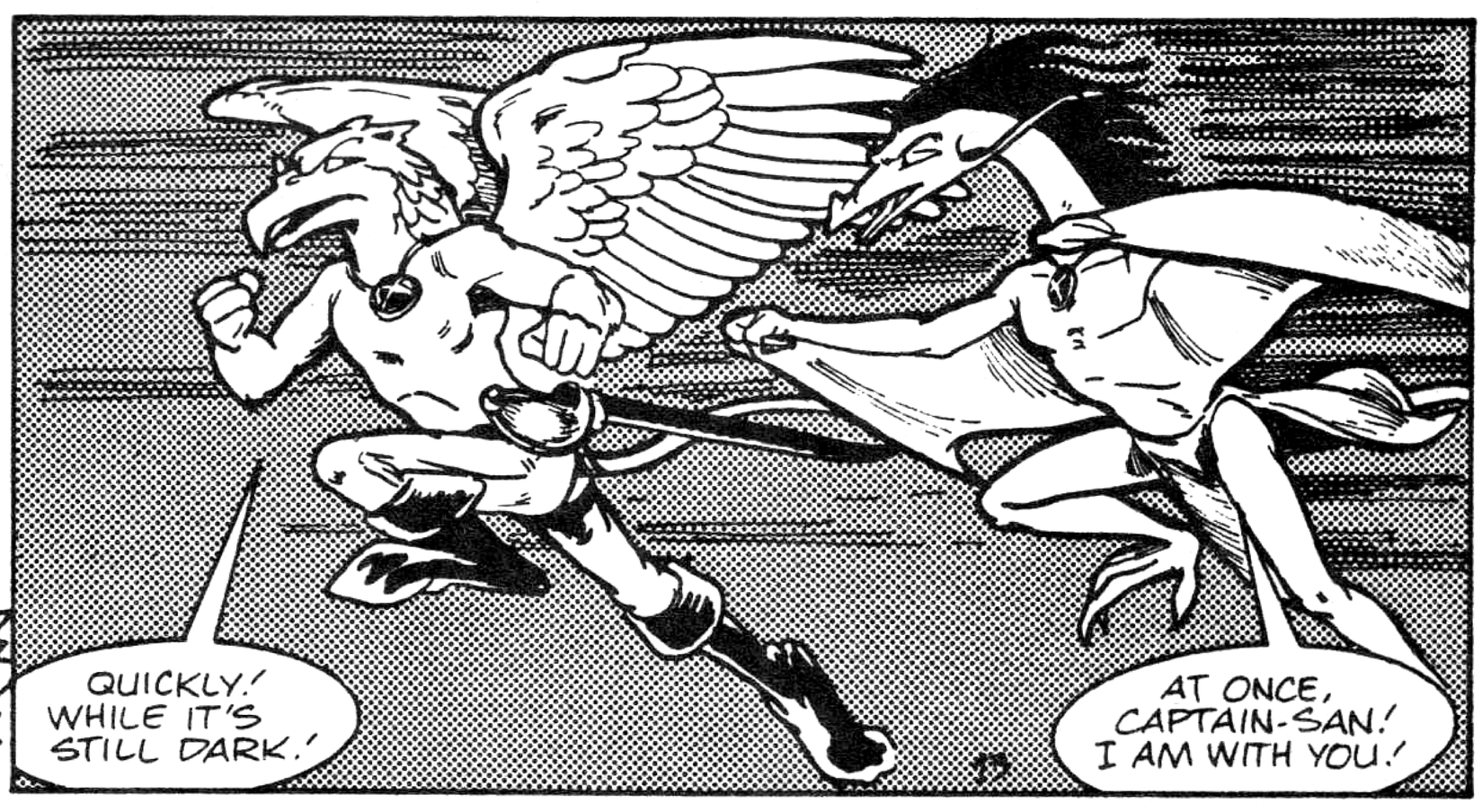

SUCH A LONELY NEST WITHOUT MY FIREPETAL-CHAN. AND IT IS TO REMAIN LONELY FOR THREE YEARS! YET THREE YEARS DO NOT AN ETERNITY MAKE.
THEY ONLY SEEM AS THOUGH THEY DO...

I AM AT YOUR DISPOSAL CAPTAIN-SAN.
I HOPE YOU'LL FORGIVE THE INTRUSION, COMMANDER, BUT I NEEDED TO TALK TO YOU.

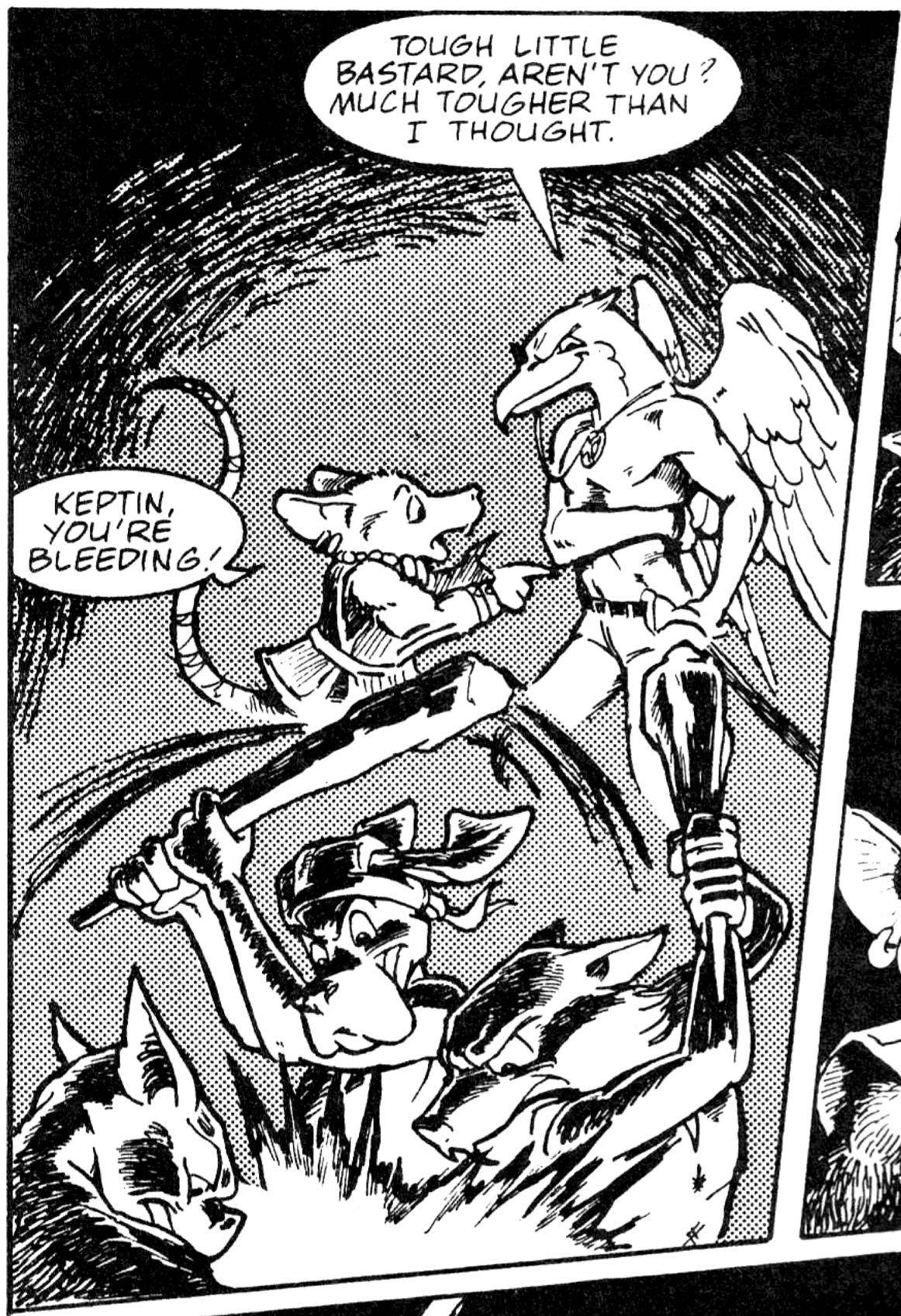

DID THE EMPRESS EXPLAIN WHY YOU WERE BROUGHT HERE?
YES, TO STRENGTHEN PALACE SECURITY.
SECURITY NEEDS TO BE STRENGTHENED BECAUSE OF A DOMESTIQUE THIEF NAMED TABBE LE FAUVE! HE BROKE INTO THE PALACE SOME WEEKS AGO... AND COMPROMISED THE EMPRESS' VIRTUE!

THE EMPRESS WAS SEDUCED BY A COMMON DOMESTIQUE?! WE MUST DO SOMETHING, CAPTAIN-SAN! THE EMPRESS' HONOR MUST BE AVENGED!

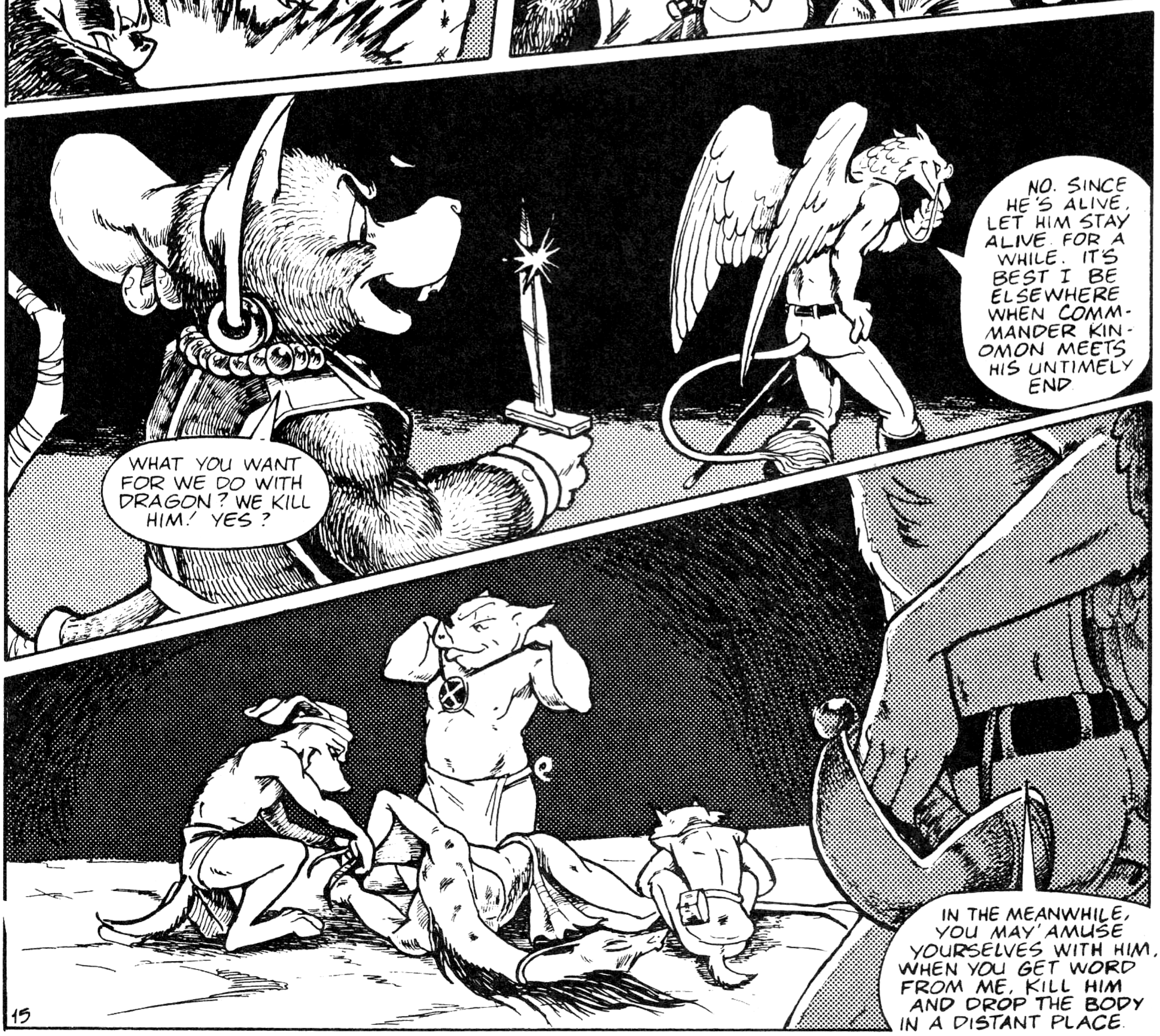

I HAVE RECEIVED WORD ON LE FAUVE'S WHEREABOUTS IF I APPROACH HIM WITH A BATTALION, HE WILL SEE US AND ESCAPE. HOWEVER, IF YOU AND I APPROACH HIM BY AIR, WE COULD SURPRISE HIM AND TAKE HIM PRISONER...


QUICKLY! WHILE IT'S STILL DARK!
AT ONCE, CAPTAIN-SAN! I AM WITH YOU!

THERE...
DESPOILER OF MY EMPRESS' HONOR! DIE BY DRAGONFIRE!
MY FIRE!
GONE...
SCRATCH! KVETCH! COME HELP ME!


TOUGH LITTLE BASTARD, AREN'T YOU? MUCH TOUGHER THAN I THOUGHT.
KEPTIN, YOU'RE BLEEDING!

WATER FROM A UNICORN POOL QUENCHES DRAGONFIRE.
IT ALSO HEALS!
GOOD AS NEW!


WHAT YOU WANT FOR WE DO WITH DRAGON? WE KILL HIM! YES?
NO. SINCE HE'S ALIVE, LET HIM STAY ALIVE FOR A WHILE. IT'S BEST I BE ELSEWHERE WHEN COMMANDER KINOMON MEETS HIS UNTIMELY END.
IN THE MEANWHILE, YOU MAY AMUSE YOURSELVES WITH HIM. WHEN YOU GET WORD FROM ME, KILL HIM AND DROP THE BODY IN A DISTANT PLACE.

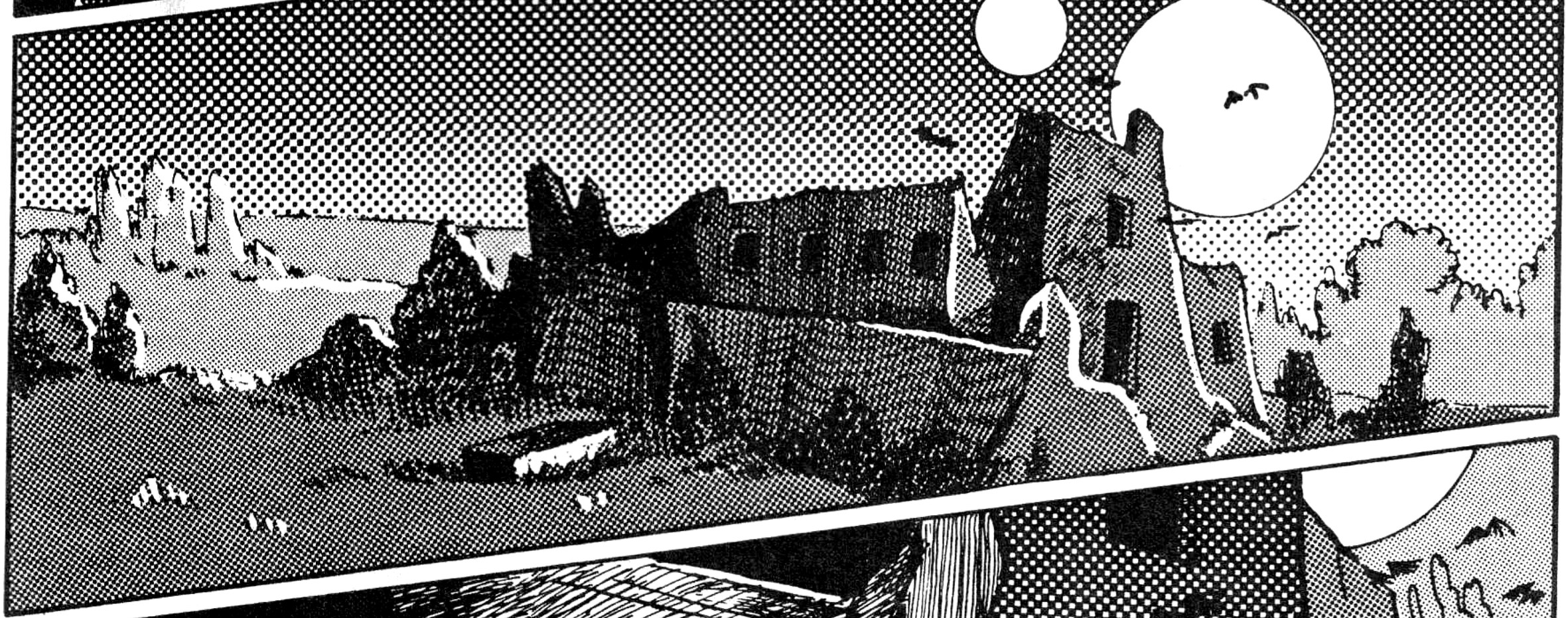
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
I HEARD SOMETHING.
A FIGHT.
PEOPLE FIGHT A LOT IN THE WALLOWS. IT'S NOT A NICE PART OF TOWN.
THIS WAS DIFFERENT. VERY BRIEF. PROBABLY VERY DEADLY. I'M GOING TO CHECK ON IT.
NOBODY WANTS TROUBLE. YOU GO LOOKING FOR IT.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO COME.
'COURSE I'LL COME. JUST LET ME GET MY PANTS ON!
THEY HAVEN'T BEEN GONE LONG. FIRE'S STILL HOT.
THEY LEFT SOMETHING ELSE, TOO. BLOOD.

NOT A LOT OF BLOOD, THOUGH. WHOEVER THEY JUMPED IS STILL BREATHING.
REMARKABLE, CONSIDERING WHAT ELSE I FOUND.

WHAT'S THAT? A GOLD COIN?
NO. SOMETHING RARER. THE SCALE FROM A GOLDEN DRAGON.

WHAT'S A GOLDEN DRAGON DOING OUT HERE?
AN EXCELLENT QUESTION. ONE WHICH DEMANDS AN ANSWER.

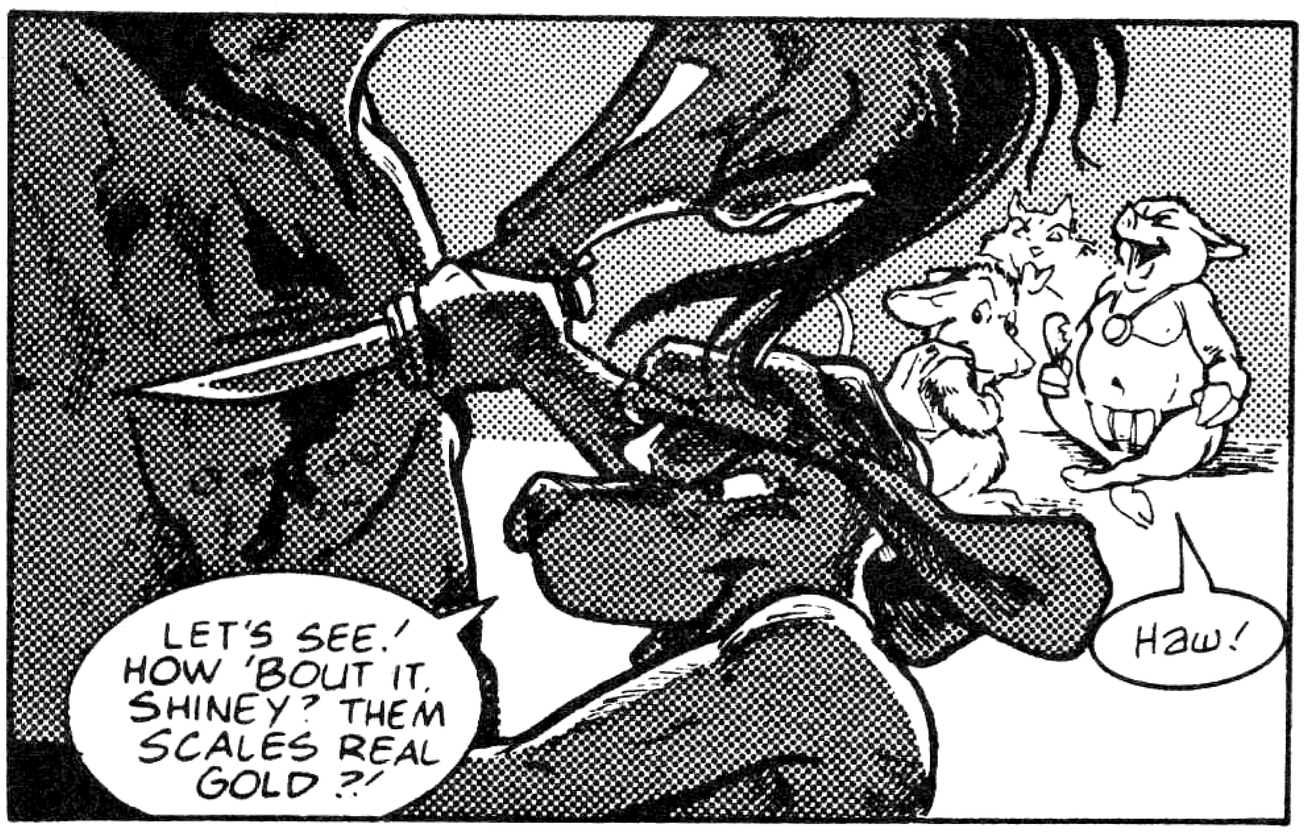
BUT FIRST, IF THERE'S A GOLDEN DRAGON IN THE WALLOWS TONIGHT, HE'S IN DEEP TROUBLE. HE'S GOING TO NEED OUR HELP.



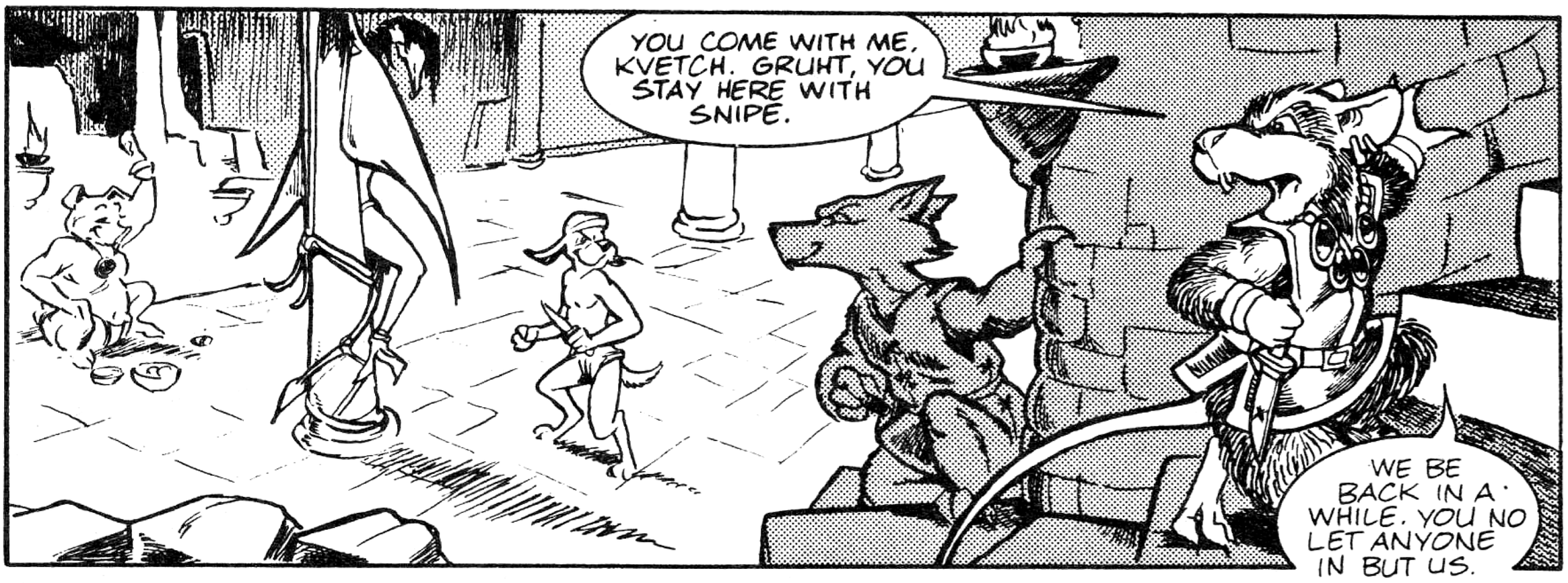
HOLLAR ALL YOU WANT TO, SHINEY. AIN'T NOBODY GONNA HEAR YOU DOWN HERE.

WHAT FOR YOU WASTE YOUR TIME, SNIPE? GOLDEN DRAGONS NO FEEL PAIN LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.
HE BLEEDS LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.

YEAH, HE DON'T LOOK SO FIERCE TO ME!
A DRAGON AIN'T MUCH WITHOUT HIS FIRE! HIS SCALES PROBABLY AIN'T EVEN GOLD!

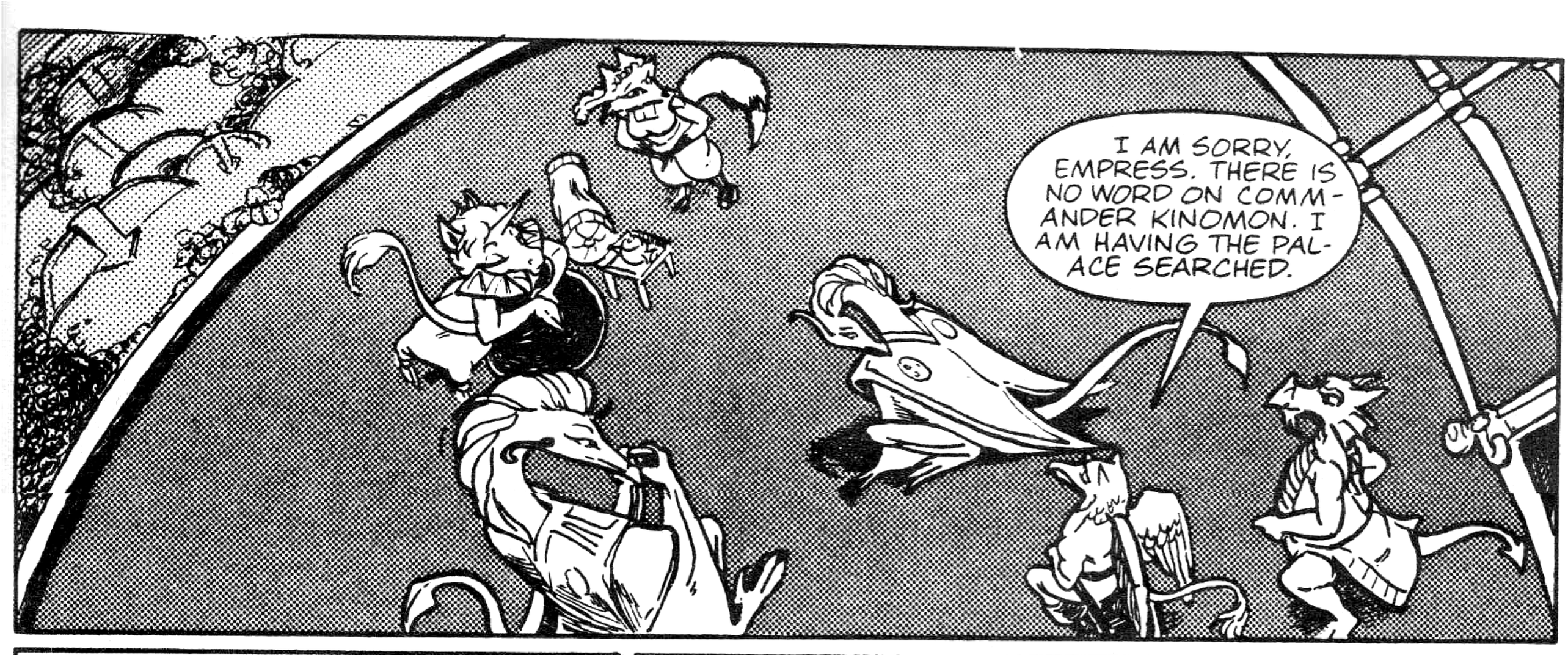

LET'S SEE! HOW 'BOUT IT, SHINEY? THEM SCALES REAL GOLD?!
Haw!

DAMN! FAKE! HE AIN'T A GOLD DRAGON! HE'S A TIN DRAGON!

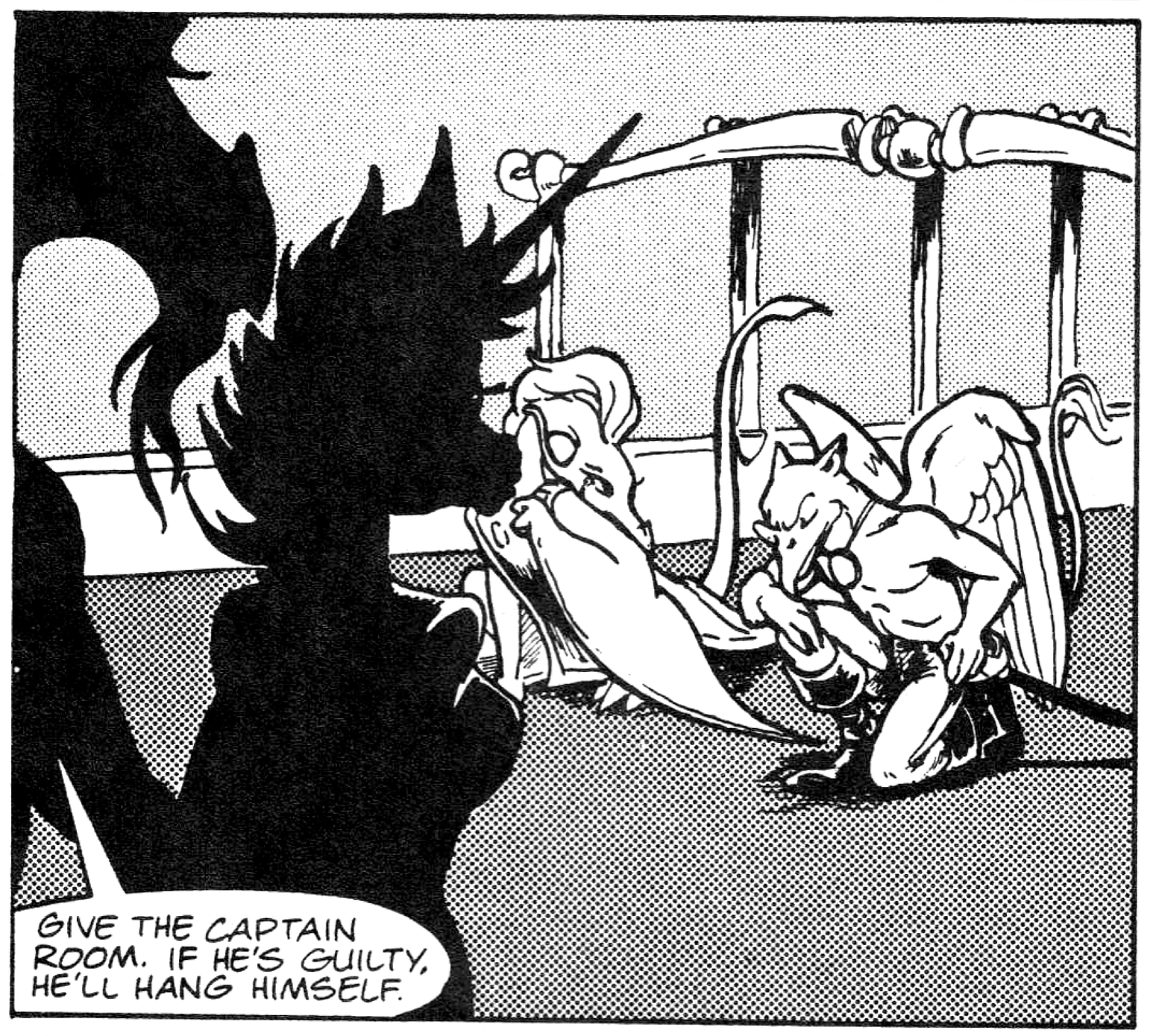

YOU COME WITH ME, KVETCH. GRUHT, YOU STAY HERE WITH SNIPE.
WE BE BACK IN A WHILE. YOU NO LET ANYONE IN BUT US.

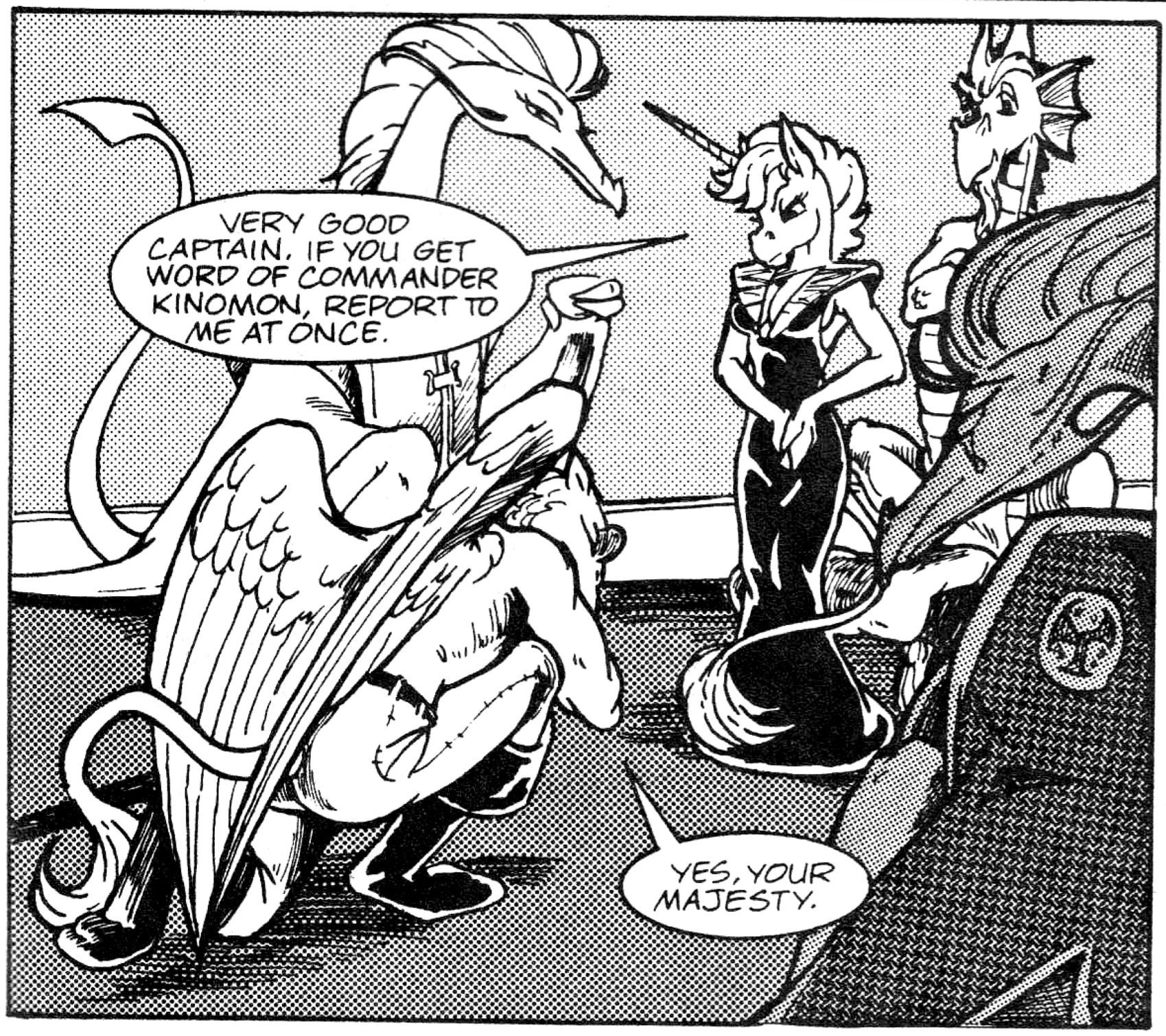
WHAT'CHA GONNA DO NOW?
POOR SHINEY LOST HIS FIRE. I'M GONNA HELP HIM FIND IT.
KINOMON-SAN, I PRESUME?
TALKATIVE, AIN'T HE?
IF YOU'D BEEN KIDNAPED AND TORTURED, YOU WOULDN'T BE TALKATIVE, EITHER HELP ME WITH HIM.
AH!
THAT WAS GRACEFUL!
VERY FUNNY. LET'S GET HIM OUT OF HERE!

I WAS THERE WHEN EMPEROR ALLYNRUD CHALLENGED JOO-SAMA, EMPRESS ALICIA. SINGLE COMBAT IS A CHERISHED TRADITION IN THE GOLDEN REALM. WHEN ALLYNRUD CHALLENGED HER, THE GOLDEN MOTHER WAS OBLIGED TO ACCEPT. NO ONE BELIEVED THAT NOBLE UNICORN WOULD SUCCEED, BUT HE WAS ADMIRED FOR TRYING.
WHEN ALLYNRUD QUENCHED JOO-SAMA'S FIRE AND DEFEATED HER, WE AS A NATION WERE FORCED TO ACCEPT THE SOVEREIGNCY OF HIS EMPIRE.
AND WE ARE PLEASED TO HAVE THE CONFIDENCE OF SUCH A VALUABLE ALLY.!
WE HAVE NEVER REGRETTED IT.
FORGIVE ME, PRINCESS.! I MUST SPEAK WITH YOU.!
CALM YOURSELF, LADY FIREPETAL.! WHAT IS THE TROUBLE?
COMMANDER KINOMON IS NOT IN HIS QUARTERS.! THERE IS NO SIGN OF HIM.!
PERHAPS HE'S OUT ON PATROL.
I DO NOT THINK SO, LADY. HIS BED HAS NOT BEEN SLEPT IN AND NO ONE HAS SEEN HIM.
HAVE YOU SPOKEN TO CAPTAIN PLUME?
CAPTAIN PLUME SAID HE WOULD CHECK AND REPORT TO YOU IMMEDIATELY, EMPRESS.


I AM SORRY, EMPRESS. THERE IS NO WORD ON COMMANDER KINOMON. I AM HAVING THE PALACE SEARCHED.

REGINALD CLAIMS TO HAVE BEEN IN HIS ROOMS ALL NIGHT AND I CAN FIND NO WITNESSES TO THE CONTRARY. IF KINOMON WAS TAKEN BY FORCE I'D SUSPECT WE'D KNOW. IT IS NOT EASY TO SUBDUE A FIRE-BREATHING DRAGON!
WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST?


GIVE THE CAPTAIN ROOM. IF HE'S GUILTY, HE'LL HANG HIMSELF.


VERY GOOD CAPTAIN. IF YOU GET WORD OF COMMANDER KINOMON, REPORT TO ME AT ONCE.
YES, YOUR MAJESTY.

BON JOUR, MONSIEUR KINOMON. FEELING BETTER?

WHAT IS THIS PLACE? WHO ARE YOU?
THIS PLACE IS MY HUMBLE HOME AND I AM TABBE LE FAUVE! GREATEST THIEF IN XANADU!

DESPOILER OF MY EMPRESS' HONOR!!
JONATHAN! HELP!!
HE SEDUCED THE EMPRESS!
WHO TOLD YOU THAT!? WOULDN'T BE CAPTAIN REGINALD PLUME BY ANY CHANCE? ISN'T HE THE BIRD WHO GOT YOU IN THIS MESS? HOW MUCH YOU WANNA BET HE LIED?

YOU OKAY?
FINE. JUST SLIGHTLY RUFFLED.
SORRY, TABBE-SAN. I HAVE MIS-JUDGED YOU.

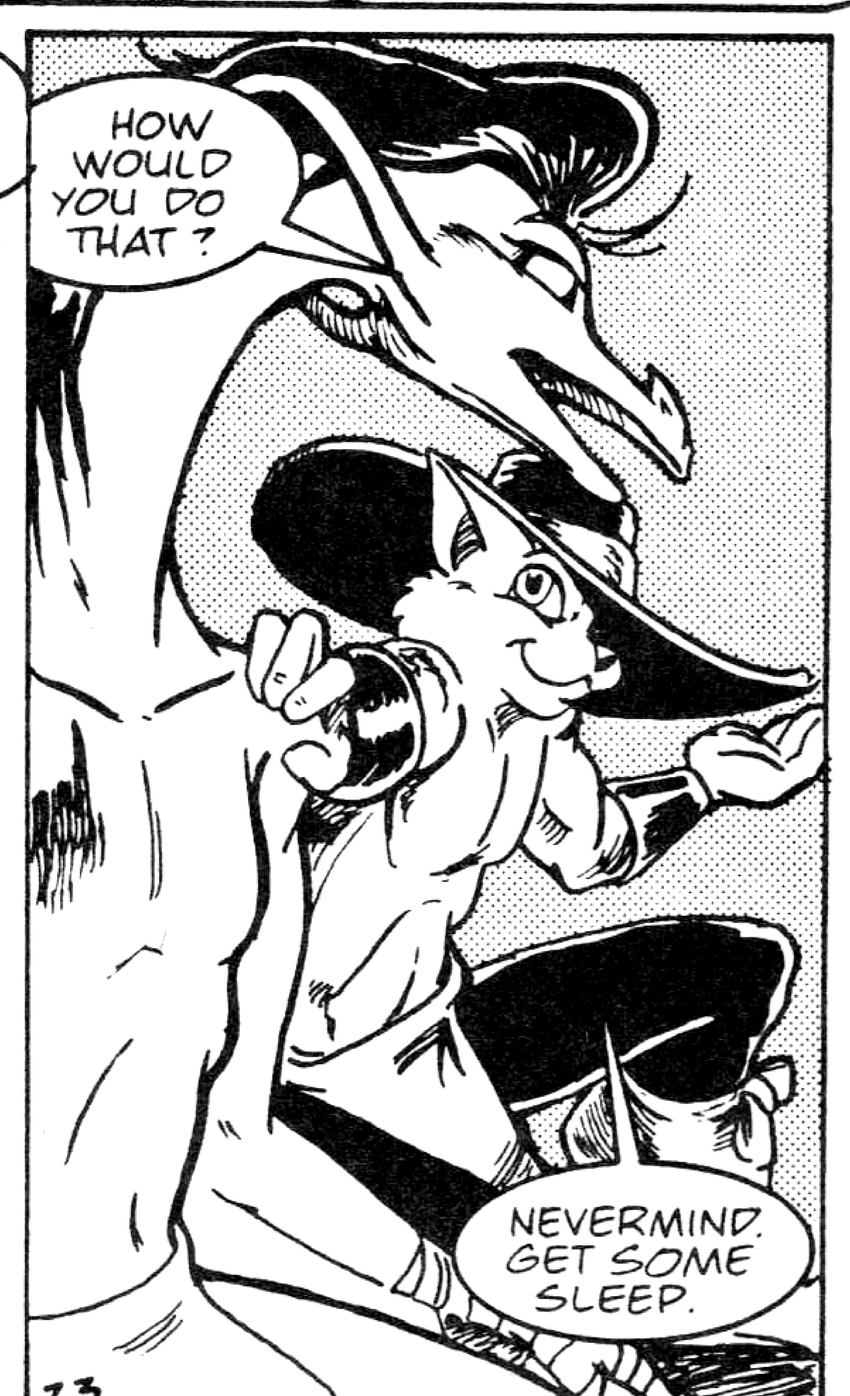
NO OFFENSE TAKEN, MONSIEUR KINOMON. IF YOU'RE FEELING BETTER WE CAN TAKE YOU BACK TO THE PALACE.
I CANNOT GO BACK TO THE PALACE.

WHY NOT?
I AM DISHONORED. I ALLOWED MYSELF TO BE TRICKED AND CAPTURED. MY SISTER IS RIGHT. I AM TOO IMPETUOUS.

EVERYONE MAKES MISTAKES.
GOLDEN DRAGONS DO NOT HAVE THAT LUXURY.
DON'T YOU WANT TO SEE PLUME PUNISHED?
YES, BUT I MUST PUNISH HIM. THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO RECLAIM MY HONOR. I CANNOT DO THAT WITHOUT MY FIRE.
SURELY, GOLDEN DRAGONS HAVE LOST THEIR FIRE BEFORE. ISN'T THERE A WAY TO REKINDLE IT?

YES. WITH PART OF THE GOLDEN ESSENCE WHICH COMES FROM THE THRONE OF THE GOLDEN MOTHER. PRINCESS KAJIKO CARRIES SOME AS A SIGN OF HER RANK.
WON'T SHE GIVE YOU SOME? YOU'RE HER BROTHER!

NO. I AM DISHONORED. THAT I AM HER BROTHER MAKES NO DIFFERENCE.
WOULD YOU ACCEPT THIS GOLDEN ESSENCE IF I GOT IT FOR YOU?


HOW WOULD YOU DO THAT?
NEVERMIND. GET SOME SLEEP.

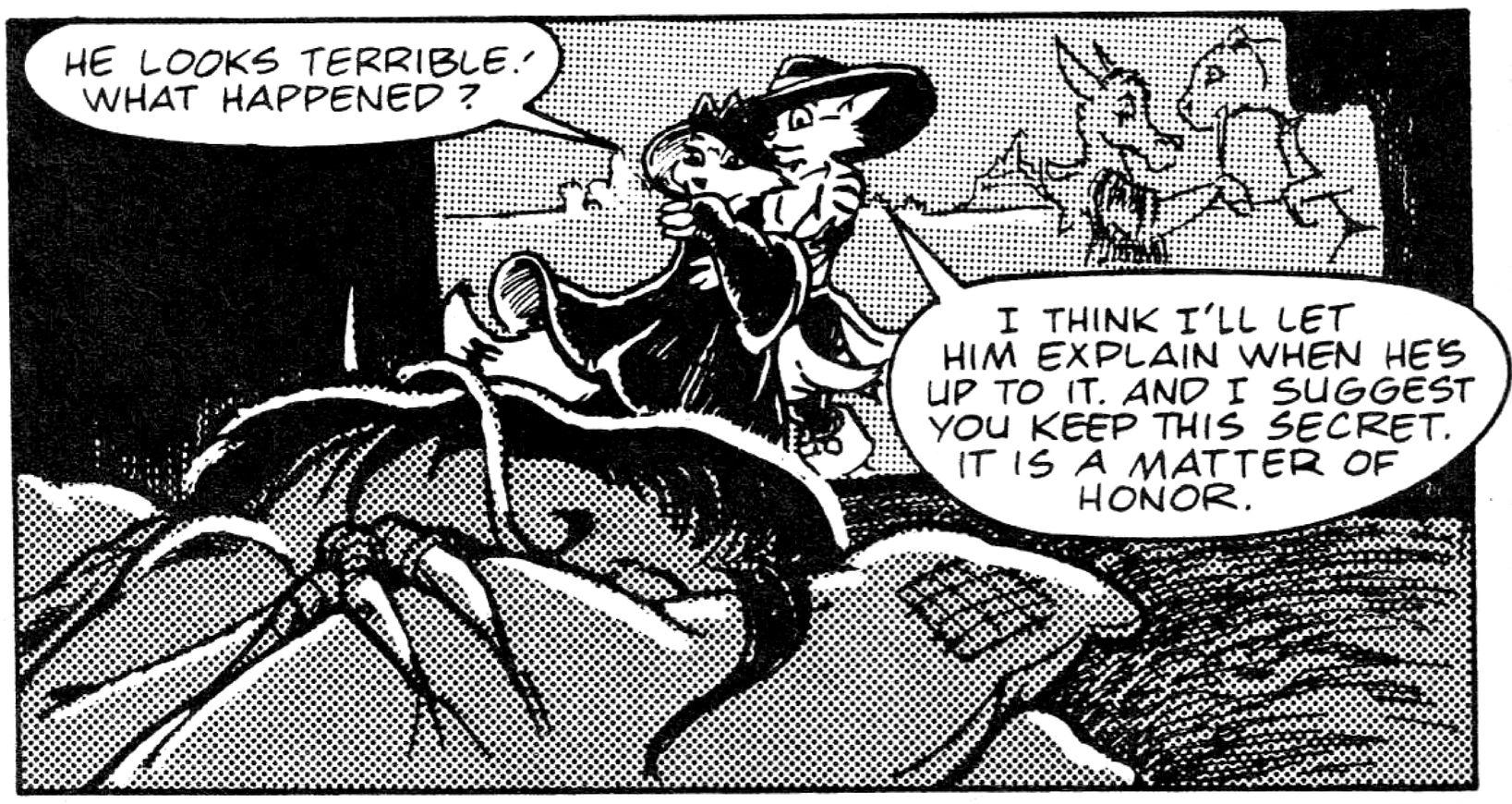
SO YOU'RE GONNA STEAL THIS GOLDEN WHAZZIT ?
OF COURSE! I'D LOVE TO SEE DEAR REGINALD GET HIS! BESIDES, IT'S A GOOD EXCUSE TO SEE FATIMA
GEE, THIS IS SERIOUS! USUALLY YOU DON'T CARRY A TORCH FOR MORE THAN A WEEK!

TABBE! I NEED YOUR HELP!
FATIMA! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? THE WALLOWS ARE A DANGEROUS PLACE FOR A BEAUTIFUL LADY LIKE YOU!

ONE OF THE GOLDEN DRAGONS IS MISSING
YOU MEAN THAT DRAGON OVER THERE?

KINOMON!

NO, MY LOVE! HE'S NOT UP TO HAVING VISITORS.

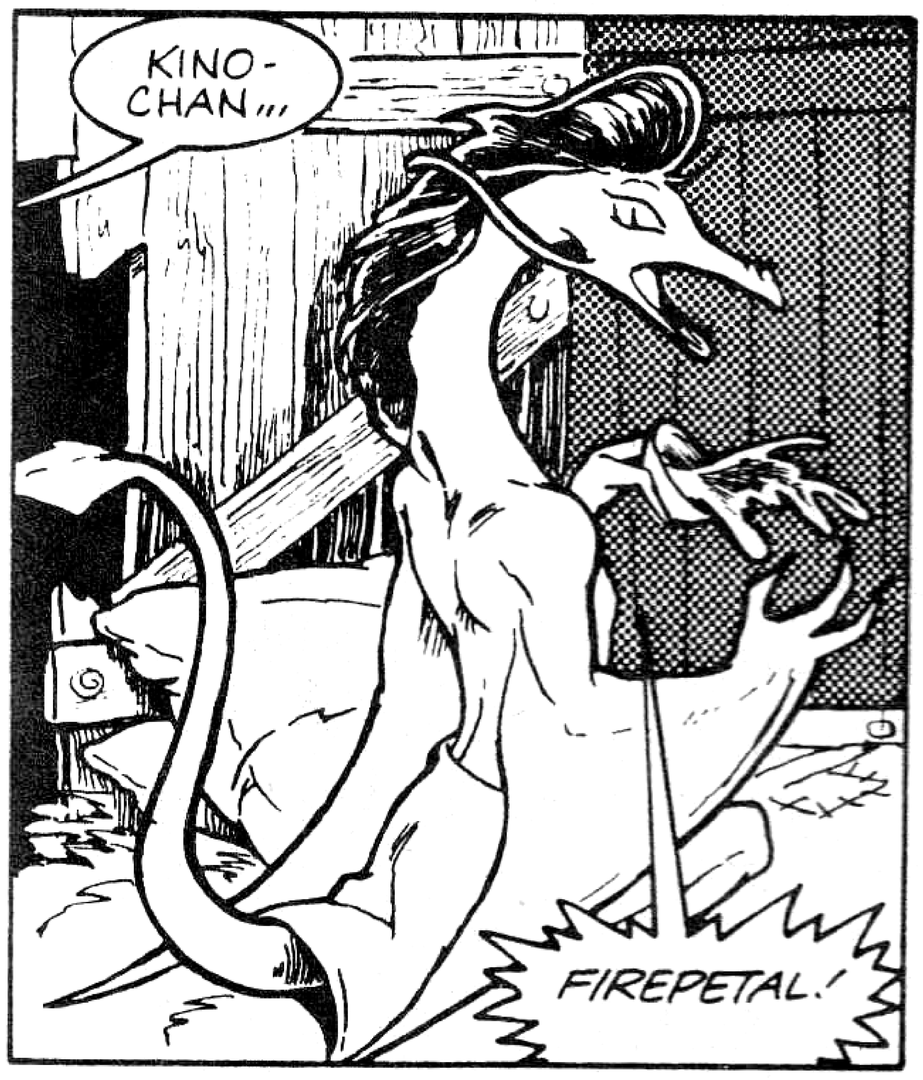

HE LOOKS TERRIBLE! WHAT HAPPENED?
I THINK I'LL LET HIM EXPLAIN WHEN HE'S UP TO IT. AND I SUGGEST YOU KEEP THIS SECRET. IT IS A MATTER OF HONOR.

HONOR OR NOT, THERE'S SOMEONE WHO MUST KNOW. DON'T WORRY. SHE'LL BE VERY DISCREET!

IF YOU WANT TO HELP KINOMON, GO BACK TO THE PALACE. WAIT FOR ME IN YOUR QUARTERS TONIGHT.
OF COURSE. IF IT WILL HELP.

YOU SURE YOU'RE OKAY? I FEEL FUNNY LEAVING YOU ALONE.
I AM FINE, JONATHAN-SAN. MY RACE HEALS QUICKLY. I CAN FLY IF I HAVE TO.
IF THAT RAT COMES BACK, FLY! YOU CAN GET EVEN LATER!

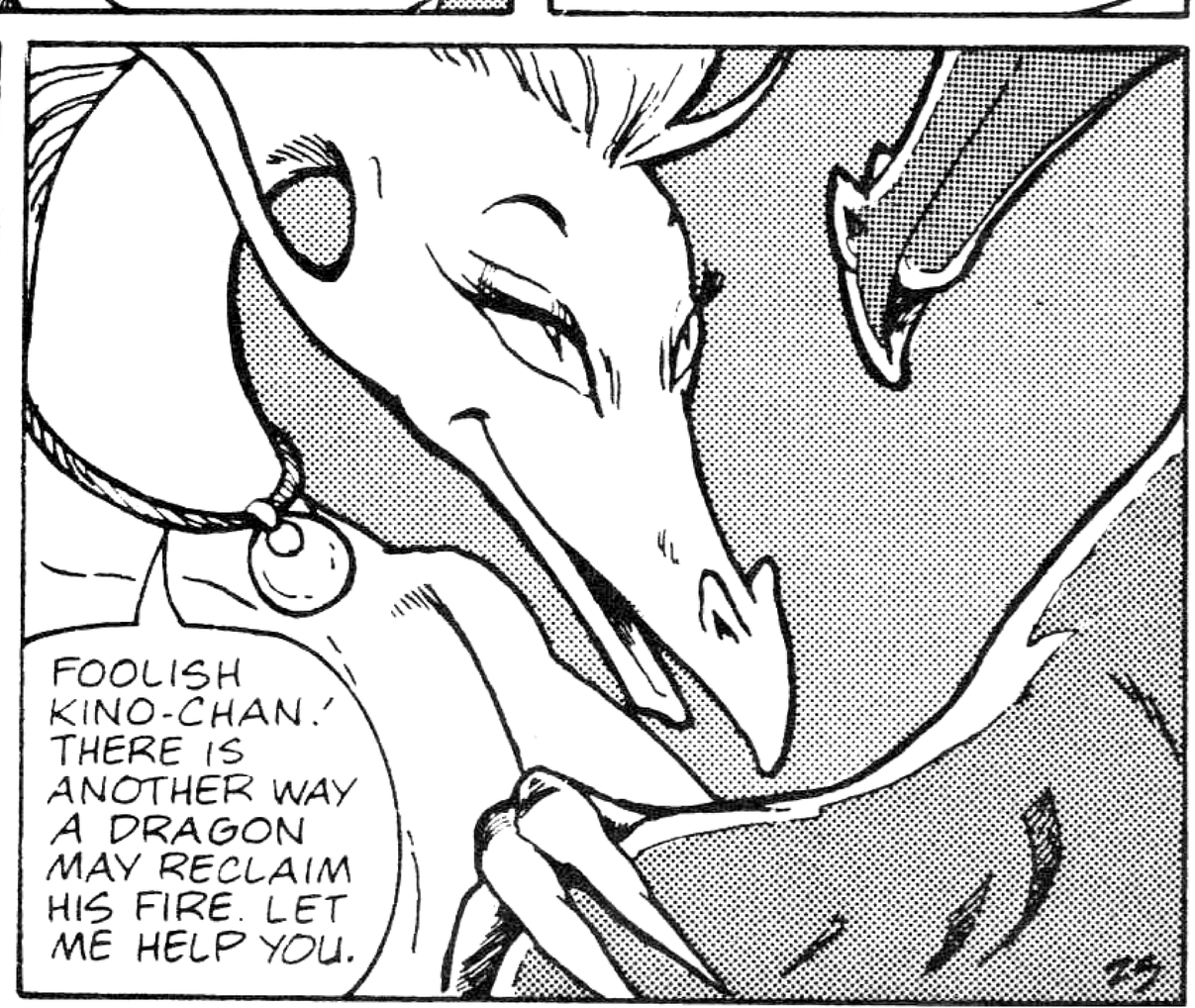
COME ALONG, MON AMI! THE NIGHT IS FLEETING!

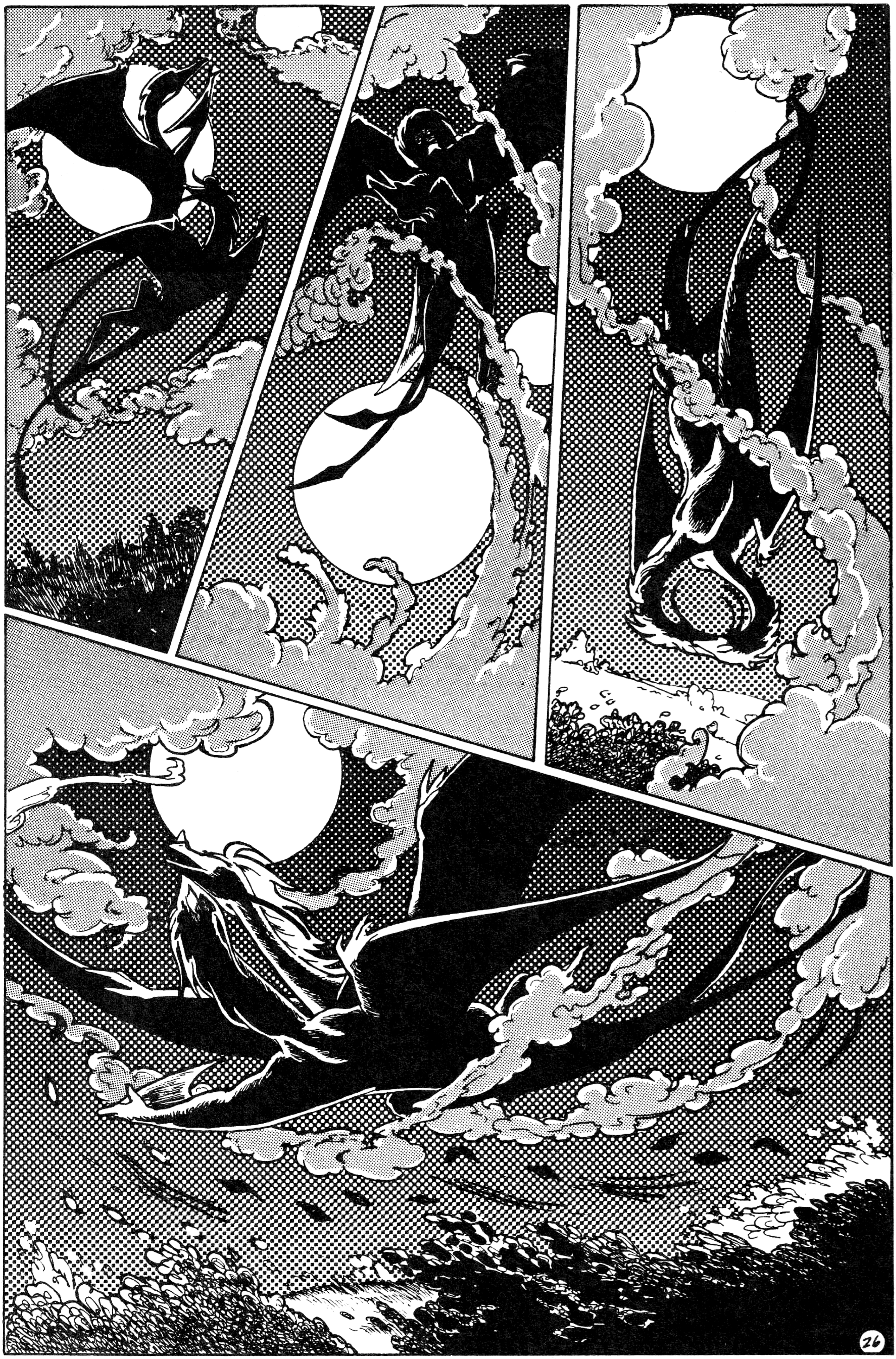

KINO-CHAN...
FIREPETAL!

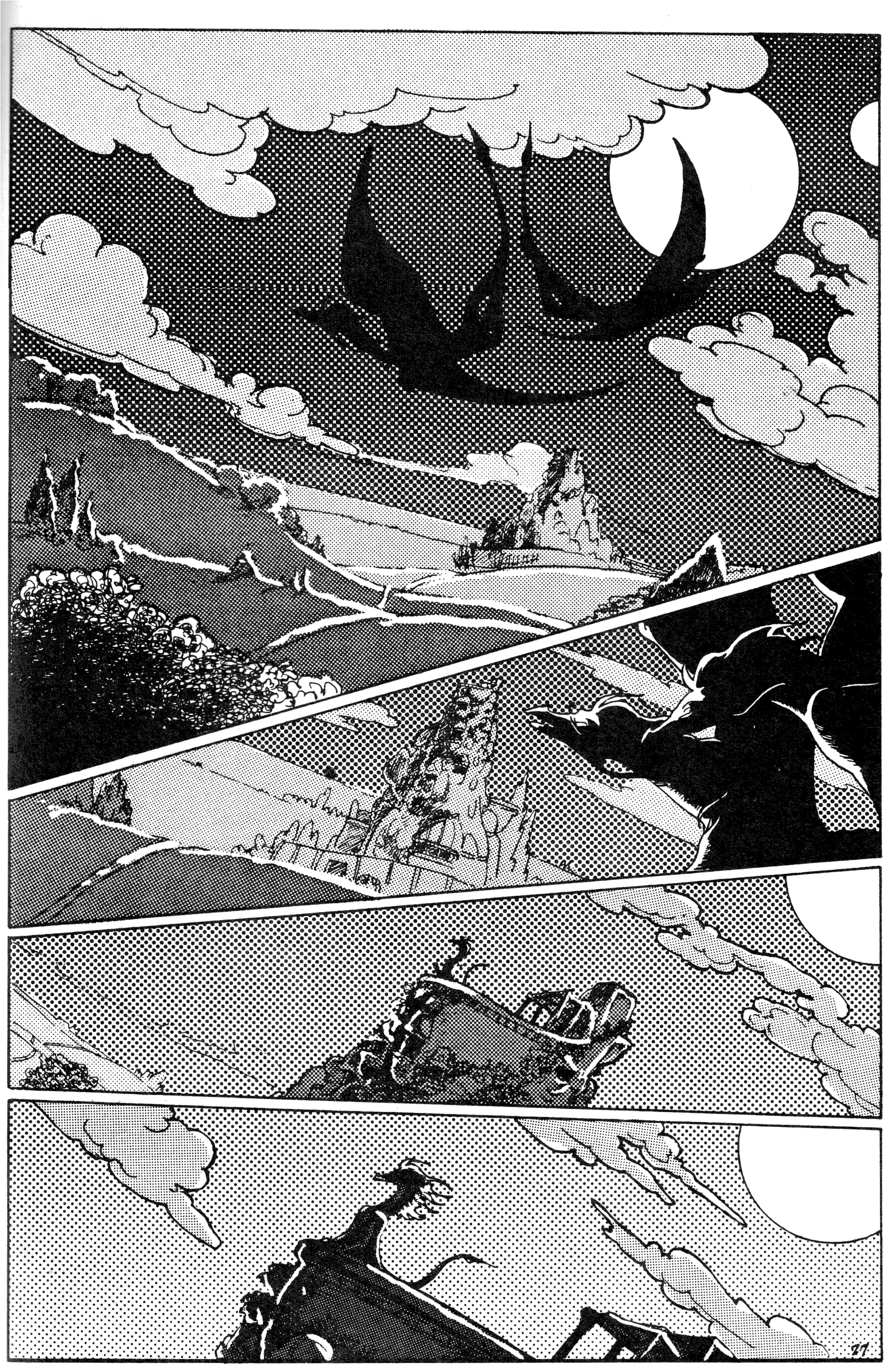
DON'T! I AM DISHONORED!
HONOR OR DISHONOR, IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE. I LOVE YOU.

YOU CANNOT LOVE ME. I AM A WARRIOR WITHOUT DRAGONFIRE. THAT IS LESS THAN NOTHING!

THEN YOU MUST HAVE YOUR FIRE BACK!
TO DO THAT, I MUST SWALLOW PART OF THE GOLDEN ESSENCE. KAJIKO WILL NOT PERMIT THAT.


FOOLISH KINO-CHAN! THERE IS ANOTHER WAY A DRAGON MAY RECLAIM HIS FIRE. LET ME HELP YOU.

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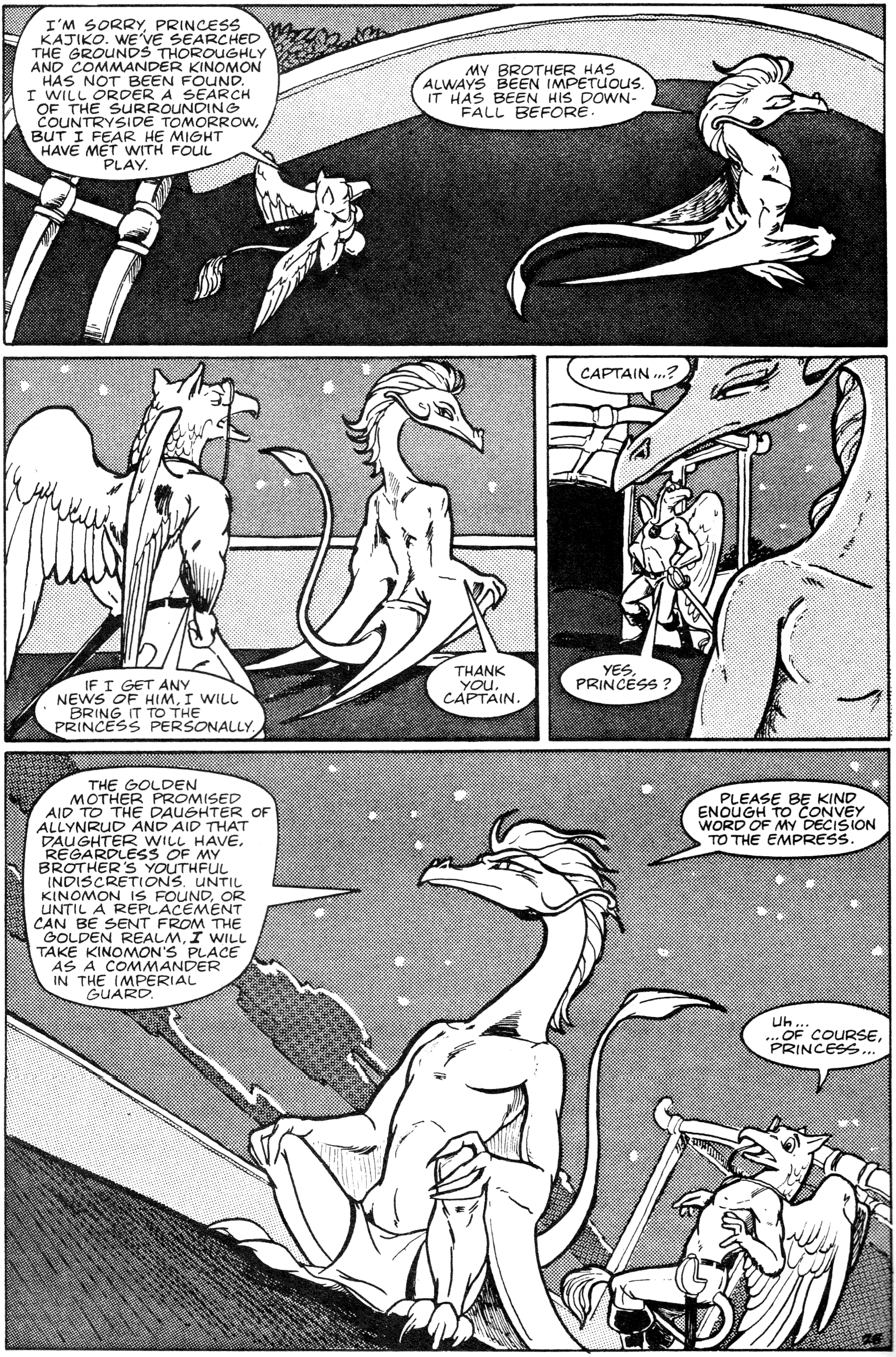

I'M SORRY, PRINCESS KAJIKO. WE'VE SEARCHED THE GROUNDS THOROUGHLY AND COMMANDER KINOMON HAS NOT BEEN FOUND. I WILL ORDER A SEARCH OF THE SURROUNDING COUNTRYSIDE TOMORROW, BUT I FEAR HE MIGHT HAVE MET WITH FOUL PLAY.
MY BROTHER HAS ALWAYS BEEN IMPETUOUS. IT HAS BEEN HIS DOWN-FALL BEFORE.
IF I GET ANY NEWS OF HIM, I WILL BRING IT TO THE PRINCESS PERSONALLY.
THANK YOU, CAPTAIN.
CAPTAIN...?
YES, PRINCESS?
THE GOLDEN MOTHER PROMISED AID TO THE DAUGHTER OF ALLYNRUD AND AID THAT DAUGHTER WILL HAVE, REGARDLESS OF MY BROTHER'S YOUTHFUL INDISCRETIONS. UNTIL KINOMON IS FOUND, OR UNTIL A REPLACEMENT CAN BE SENT FROM THE GOLDEN REALM, I WILL TAKE KINOMON'S PLACE AS A COMMANDER IN THE IMPERIAL GUARD.
PLEASE BE KIND ENOUGH TO CONVEY WORD OF MY DECISION TO THE EMPRESS.
UH... ...OF COURSE, PRINCESS...

XANADU

We hope you are enjoying XANADU so far! It's been a lot of fun putting this together and working with the talented and only slightly confused Vicky Wyman, the bizarre Steve Gallacci and the Super Spud, Bud Tuby. Almost as fun as a boogie-board! The rest of the series is coming along just fine: Vicky is finishing up on the last two issues as we speak, and I can promise you that they will be dynamite!

The first issue is sitting next to me at the moment and as far as I can tell, there was only one major Faux Pas. The inside front cover was printed as the inside back cover and visa-versa; hopefully, this didn't cause you too much confusion. I also learned that there's a lot of work that goes into a comic that you, as reader, never really see. My advice to aspiring comic producers: get someone else to do it!

If you have any interest in meeting any of the crew that puts this book (and other *THOUGHTS AND IMAGE / LX, LTD.* publications) together, a large number of us will be at the San Diego Comic Con this year. Steve Gallacci, Lela Dowling, Ken Macklin, Monika Livingston and Doug Durbrow (T&I production manager), Lex Nakashima, Gordan Garb, Vicky Wyman, and msc. critters and novelty acts can be found at a table somewhere in the dealer's room. This group, now collectively known as the West Coast Artists Pod (or, The Pod) will be short Bud Tuby (off visiting relatives in Finland) and myself (radical wave scene up north) but may (hopefully) include Donna Barr! In any case, stop by and say hello! There will be all kinds of interesting stuff there – roughs for future issues of Xanadu, Albedo, Fusion and The Dreamery; some really terrific cloisonne pins (including a

new Weasel Patrol pin!); mercenary artists sketching for cash; Infernal Revenue Agents keeping a close eye on artists sketching for cash; back issues and new issues; posters and, possibly, a Xanadu portfolio (if it's ready in time – it looks great so far!); and a mini-garage sale (made up of all kinds of stuff we've accumulated putting the books together over the years; neat stuff if you thing layouts, roughs, sketches, ads and various stats are cool...). Whatever, come out and see us if you can!

Even if you can't make it out to San Diego, drop us a line! Lex has likened putting a comic together to several weeks in a sensory deprivation tank, and he's not far from wrong. It never has to be anything fancy, but remember: We can't *HEAR* your encouraging thoughts! Also, writing to us gets you put on our mailing list. Why is this good, you ask? For starters, it gets you information on stuff that won't be sold through comic stores, stuff like pins, mini-comics, previews of upcoming books and the like. Also, we have been known to send cards out to everyone on our mailing list around Christmas time and any other holiday that we might find amusing.... So, write! At least send a a postcard with your address on it (comments and criticisms are optional, but welcome!).

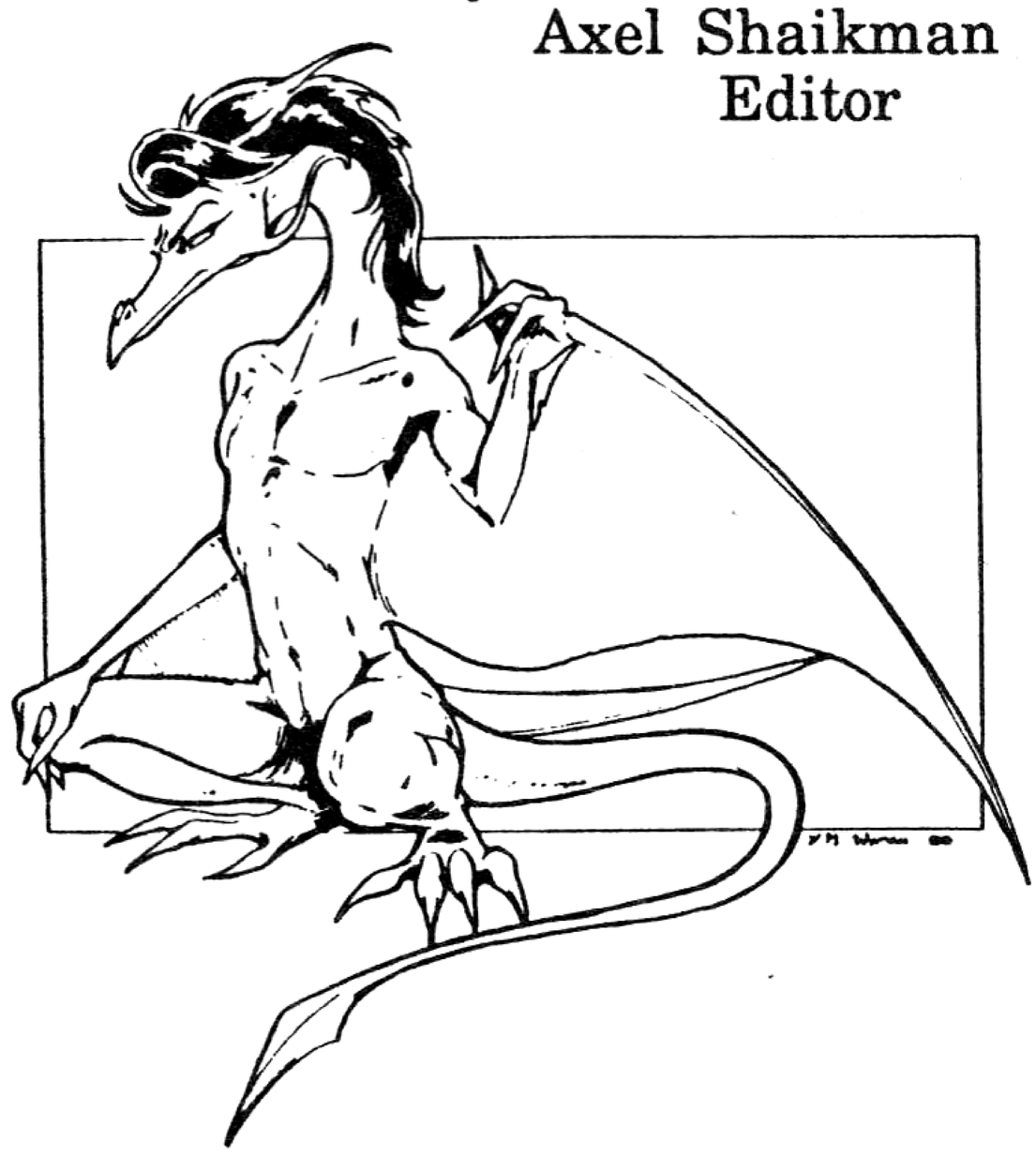
On a related note: if you have trouble finding issues of Xanadu, nag your local store! Have them nag their distributors! I don't know how much this will help, but it may prevent the usual distributor policy of "order twenny percent less than last time." If you still can't get copies, then write to Thoughts and Images and include a check for whatever books you're ordering (assume $2/issue of Xanadu until further notice; this includes postage and handling).

Information and orders can be sent to:

Thoughts & Images
c/o Nebula Circle
P.O.Box 15168
Portland, OR
97215

The Xanadu pins mentioned last issue are still available, and this time we'll even tell you how much they are! Alicia and Tabby are $5 each and Fatima is $6. Prices include postage and handling.

See you next issue!
Axel Shaikman
Editor



Next Issue: The third part of this five-issue series promises to be one of the most powerful of the series. Treachery in Alicia's Court leads to a terrible loss, and many innocents will be drawn into a plot that will exact a heavy price of its players. Don't miss it! See you in thirty!

# ALBEDO

## MORE THAN JUST FUNNY ANIMALS

THOUGHTS & IMAGES

1988